PSYC3209 – Learning and Motivation

Unit of Study Code: PSYC3209

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Format of Unit:
2 x 1 hour lectures/week x 13 weeks
1 x 1 hour tutorial/week x 12 weeks
Tutorial sizes: maximum of 20 students per group

Credit Point Value: 4 Credit Points

Qualifying:
12 credit points of Second Year Psychology including PSYC 2111 and PSYC 2112

Assessment:
Classwork:
50% (40% from 2,000-word Report; 10% from contribution to tutorial and project)
Due Date: Thursday 17 May (week 11)

Examination:
50% essay, multiple choice questions and/or short answers

NOTE: Reports will only be marked for students who have made a satisfactory contribution to the conduct of the project. Tutorial attendance alone does not constitute a satisfactory contribution. Tutors will keep a record of contributions, such as reporting from literature reviews, preparing materials, acting as an experimenter/data collection, data coding and entry, data analysis for the group. Any student who submits a report without satisfactory contribution to the conduct of the research will receive a zero for the report. In addition, because of continuing concerns with quite unequal contributions to the conduct of the project, tutors will allocate a mark (10% of the total for the course) based on contribution to the tutorial program and conduct of the project. This will be based on the tutor’s knowledge of contributions and on a (half page) list of your own contributions to be handed with the report.

Evaluation of teaching and learning:

Date: Weeks 12 and 13 of semester
Type: Course, large group teaching, and small group teaching evaluations
Unit of study general description:

Tutorial format

Starting in Week 2 regular tutorial meetings will be held at which students will be involved in a research project conducted by the group. The 2,000-word report is based on this project.

Tutorials will begin with the group deciding on a project topic, developing the design of the experiment and planning the details. Selecting and designing the research should last until either Week 4 or 5. The experiment is then run. During this stage students may test subjects independently or work on a roster basis, and tutorial meetings will be held to discuss progress at times that fit in with the experimental schedule. Collection of results should be complete by Week 9 in time for a tutorial on analysis of the data. The tutorial in Week 10 may be devoted to discussion on writing the report, which is to be handed in at the Psychology 3 administration office on the Thursday of Week 11. If possible, the marked reports will be handed back in Week 13.

You should allocate at least 20 hours of tutorial time to this work over the semester, in addition to independent reading. This format is designed to allow you to become involved from start to finish in a meaningful piece of research on learning or motivation that is more than a replication of previous experiments. The more you put into it, the more valuable it will be.

Limitations on available equipment will restrict the range of feasible experiments, as may time constraints. Projects both with rats and with human subjects will be available.

Collaboration vs independence

The project should be a team effort in which each member is expected to contribute the same amount of work towards developing the experiment, in terms of background reading and ideas on design and procedure, as well as towards the 'busy' work of actually carrying it out and analysing the data. Furthermore, there is likely to be considerable group discussion of what the results mean. On the other hand, writing a report has to be an individual effort, carried out independently of anyone else.

Lecture programme

Lecture 1: The evolutionary approach to learning. (Job)


Lecture 2: Learned helplessness in the aversive context. (Job)


Lecture 3: Learned helplessness in the appetitive situation. (Job)


Lecture 4: Attributional style, success and failure. (Job)

Lecture 5: Theories of the effects of uncontrollability: Helplessness, omnipotence, anxiety, or exhaustion. (Job)


Lecture 6: Stress and food consumption. (Job)


Lecture 7: The role of learning in stress and illness. (Job)


Lecture 8: Social learning in animals. (Job)


Lecture 9: Illusion of control and optimism bias. (Job)


Lecture 10: Accounts of optimism bias. (Job)


Lecture 11: Risk-taking and risk perception. (Job)


Lecture 12: Learning to be a road user. (Job)

Lecture 13: Fear in health promotion propaganda. (Job)


Lecture 14: Basic properties of classical conditioning (Boakes)


Lecture 15: Acquired food preferences and aversions (Boakes)

*Domjan (1998), pp.66-67; 82-83; 87-92.


Lecture 16: Conditioned changes in behaviour and drug tolerance (Boakes)

*Domjan (1998), pp.92-106


Lecture 17: Introducing the Rescorla-Wagner model. (Boakes)

*Domjan (1998), pp.106-113

See also Mazur (1990, 1994), Ch.5; Schwartz (1989); Dickinson (1980).

Lecture 18: Stimulus competition in associative learning. (Boakes)


Lecture 19: Conditioned inhibition. (Boakes)


Lecture 20: Contextual factors in learning. (Boakes)


Lecture 21: Contingency and context. (Boakes)

Lecture 22: Human contingency and causality judgements. (Boakes)

Lecture 23: Learning retrospectively. (Boakes)


Lecture 24: Conditioning and awareness. (Boakes)


Lecture 25: Implicit learning. (Boakes)


Lecture 26: Human evaluative conditioning. (Boakes)


Reading

The main text for the Learning component of Psychology 2 is suitable for many of the lecture topics:


Alternative textbooks (with multiple copies in Fisher Undergraduate library) that will sometimes be useful include:


Schwartz, B. Psychology of learning and behavior. 3rd edition. New York: Norton, 1989. (See also later editions by Schwartz & Robbins)

The following book presents the basic ideas of associative learning in a non-textbook way that some students may find highly illuminating:


For a detailed treatment of some of the topics presented in Lectures 14-21 the following often still provides the best analysis:


Similarly, detailed treatment of learned helplessness is provided by


Copies of papers listed above for lectures should be available in Special Reserve, Fisher Library.
# TIMETABLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>LECTURES</th>
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| 1    | 1. The evolutionary approach to learning. (Job)  
      | 2. Learned helplessness in the aversive situation. (Job) |
| 2    | 3. Learned helplessness in the appetitive situation. (Job)  
      | 4. Attributional style, success and failure (Job) |
| 3    | 5. Theories of the effects of uncontrollability: Helplessness, omnipotence, anxiety, or exhaustion (Job)  
      | 6. Stress and food consumption (Job) |
| 4    | 7. The role of learning in stress and illness (Job)  
      | 8. Social learning in animals. (Job) |
| 5    | 9. Illusion of control and optimism bias. (Job)  
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      | 12. Learning to be a road user (Job) |
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      | 16. Conditioned changes in behavior and drug tolerance. (Boakes) |
| 9    | 17. The Rescorla-Wagner model. (Boakes)  
      | 18. Stimulus competition in associative learning. (Boakes) |
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      | 20. Contextual factors in learning. (Boakes) |
| 11   | 21. Contingency and context. (Boakes)  
      | 22. Human contingency and causality judgements.(Boakes) |
| 12   | 23. Learning retrospectively.(Boakes)  
      | 24. Conditioning and awareness.(Boakes) |
| 13   | 25. Implicit learning.(Boakes)  
      | 26. Human evaluative conditioning.(Boakes) |

**Teaching outcomes:**

1. Awareness of the recent issues and research in learning.
2. Knowledge of theoretical development in learning and motivation.
3. Appreciation of the role of theory in the generation of knowledge in learning and motivation.
4. Ability to evaluate research methodology in learning and motivation, and identify appropriate control conditions.
5. Awareness of the role of learning and motivation in relevant social/health problems.
6. Capacity to derive applications of principles from learning and motivation in order to explain various aspects of human behaviour.
7. Encourage ability to design and conduct research in learning and motivation.
8. Ability to write clearly on theoretical and empirical analyses of research in learning and motivation.
9. Development of skills in reading primary sources in this area.

**Evidence of learning:**

Assessment of learning consists of: (1) an individually written report on the group project to which a student has contributed; and (2) a 90-minute formal examination which will cover all teaching outcomes. Students are expected to attend all lectures and tutorials (regardless of which class assessment option is chosen, unless other arrangements are made with the tutor), to read the recommended papers, and to provide evidence of having obtained the appropriate knowledge, awareness and abilities through the two items of assessment.