Psychology 380: Proseminar
Learning

9:05 – 12:05 Wednesdays, Room 126A

The first half of the proseminar this semester will examine a number of core issues in Learning. My goal is to expose you to some of the fundamental issues that define modern learning theory, and to get you thinking about how they might relate to (and be useful in) other areas of psychology, including your own. This is consistent with the department’s explicit goals for proseminar, which are to

- Promote understanding and knowledge related to the specific foundational area through readings, class discussion, and assignments,
- Identify principles and analytic tools that may broaden students’ understanding of issues in their own discipline,
- Improve the quality of students’ research by making them aware of relevant research and theory in areas outside their own discipline.

I hope these next weeks will be stimulating, useful, and fun.

The Learning part of the course will follow a discussion format, with occasional micro-lectures by me when the spirit moves me. It is essential that you do the required reading before the corresponding class meeting. Each week’s readings will be left in a folder in the department xerox area. Please make your own copies.

To help facilitate discussion, I will distribute some “thought questions” a week ahead of each class. These are mainly intended to help you orient to and integrate the reading. You will also be required to write a 2-page “thought paper” before each class. In these papers, I merely ask that you reflect on or react to any aspect of the reading that interests you. Your thought papers can address the thought questions, but they do not have to. I will read and comment on each paper, but I will not grade them. They are only designed to stimulate your discussion and thinking. Sometimes they generate a dialogue between student and instructor.

I will distribute a take-home exam in the last class (March 8) that will be due a week later (March 15). The exam will encourage review of some of the key concepts and have you relate some of the material we have covered to a topic that excites you in your own research area.

Topics and readings for each class meeting are given beginning on the next page. The a’s and b’s at left merely indicate natural groupings of readings when more than three readings are assigned.
Class Meetings and Readings

January 18 (brief meeting)
Introduction and orientation

January 25
Core concepts, applications in everyday life, and scientific explanations and unity in psychology


February 1
What Pavlovian learning is really all about


February 8
Role of conditioning in drug tolerance and drug dependence


**February 15**

*Perspectives on the effects of reinforcers I*


**February 22**

*Perspectives on the effects of reinforcers II*


**March 1**

*Aversive learning in a clinical context*


**March 8**

*Memory*

