

**San José State University
Department of Psychology
PSYC 155.1 Human Learning
Fall, 2026**

Course and Contact Information

Instructor:	Dr. Steven Del Chiaro
Office Location:	DMH 342
Email:	Use Canvas email
Office Hours:	Mondays, 6:00pm -7:00pm. Fridays, 8:00am – 9:00am Appointments outside of office hours are available by request through Canvas Inbox.
Class Days/Time:	Friday 9:00am - 11:45am, August 19, 2026 to December 7, 2026
Classroom:	Dudley Moorhead Hall 353
Teaching Assistant:	Carlos Castaneda

Course Format

This is an in-person course. Regular attendance is expected, as class meetings include lectures, demonstrations, discussions, activities, and examples that build on the assigned readings and cannot be fully replicated through posted materials.

Course Website

Canvas will serve as the central hub for this course. Course materials, announcements, assignment instructions, grades, and other resources will be available through Canvas. Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are submitted through Canvas. Students are responsible for checking Canvas regularly for course announcements, updates, and due dates.

Logging Into Canvas

Canvas is available at <https://sjsu.instructure.com>. Students must activate their SJSUOne account before accessing Canvas. Your username is your SJSU ID (or employee ID), and your password is the one you created for your SJSUOne account.

Further Assistance with Canvas

Students experiencing technical issues with Canvas should first consult the Canvas Student Guides. If additional assistance is needed, contact the SJSU Information Technology Help Desk.

Course Description

Learning is one of the most fundamental processes in psychology. Every habit we develop, fear we acquire, skill we learn, and behavior we change is influenced by the principles of learning. Through learning, humans and animals adapt to an ever-changing environment, making the scientific study of learning a cornerstone of experimental psychology.

In this course, we will examine the major theories, research, and applications of learning, with particular emphasis on classical conditioning, operant conditioning, and observational learning. We will explore how these principles explain behavior across a wide range of settings, including education, mental health, parenting, sports, business, health behavior, and everyday decision making.

Throughout the semester, you will move beyond simply memorizing concepts by applying behavioral principles to real-world situations and your own experiences. The course culminates in a semester-long Self-Change Project in which you will use evidence-based behavior change techniques to modify a behavior of your choosing, giving you firsthand

experience applying the science of learning to everyday life.

Although some concepts are intellectually challenging, this course will provide you with a practical understanding of how learning shapes behavior and how behavioral science can be used to improve individual and societal outcomes. Class meetings will include lectures, demonstrations, discussions, videos, and applied activities that illustrate the principles of learning.

Learning Outcomes

The primary goal of this course will be to help you develop an understanding of the major themes, issues, and methods recognized within the psychology of learning. The aim of this course is to provide an understanding of the basic principles of the learning process. You will discover the learning processes that allow us to know how and when to act to obtain desired pleasurable aspects of our environment and to avoid unwanted unpleasant ones.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)

The primary goal of this course will be to help you develop an understanding of the major themes, issues, and methods recognized within the psychology of learning. The aim of this course is to provide an understanding of the basic principles of the learning process. You will discover the learning processes that allow us to know how and when to act in order to obtain desired pleasurable aspects of our environment and to avoid unwanted unpleasant ones.

Competencies and Performance Indicators

The competencies listed below shall be demonstrated and assessed through class discussion, exams (comprised of multiple choice, short answer and essay questions) and simulation lab reports.

1. Understand the science of learning.
 - a. Demonstrate an appreciation of the empirical foundation of the study of learning.
 - b. Be familiar with research techniques and findings that illustrate fundamental learning concepts.
2. Differentiate between various theories of learning and memory.
 - a. Be able to understand and differentiate between theories.
 - b. Be able to cite evidence supporting the views of major theorists.
3. Demonstrate the ability to apply the concepts learned in the course to concrete examples:
 - a. Be able to differentiate and explain learning concepts using your self-change project.
 - b. Be able to apply learning principles to real-world phenomena.

Program Learning Outcomes (PLO)

Upon successful completion of the psychology major requirements...

PLO1 – Knowledge Base of Psychology – Students will be able to identify, describe, and communicate the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and historical trends in psychology. (test, quizzes, paper)

PLO2 – Research Methods in Psychology – Students will be able to design, implement, and communicate basic research methods in psychology, including research design, data analysis, and interpretations. (paper)

PLO3 – Critical Thinking Skills in Psychology – Students will be able to use critical and creative thinking, skeptical inquiry, and a scientific approach to address issues related to behavior and mental processes. (paper)

PLO4 – Application of Psychology – Students will be able to apply psychological principles to individual, interpersonal, group, and societal issues. (tests, paper)

PLO5 – Values in Psychology – Students will value empirical evidence, tolerate ambiguity, act ethically, and recognize their role and responsibility as a member of society. (paper)

Required Texts/Readings

Textbook

This course uses the Cengage eBook and Learning Management System (LMS). Because many course assignments are

completed through the LMS, you must purchase access through Cengage. Purchasing a used or printed copy of the textbook alone will not provide access to the required online assignments. Instructions for purchasing and accessing the course materials will be provided during the first week of class and posted in Canvas.

Library Liaison

Bailey, Christa

Phone: 408-808-2422

Email: christa.bailey@sjsu.edu

Course Requirements and Assignments - Use Canvas Homepage to see assignments and due/dates times

Learning in this course occurs through a combination of assigned readings, in-class activities, discussions, demonstrations, online assignments, and independent study. Each assignment is designed to help you build your understanding of learning principles while applying those concepts to real-world situations. San José State University courses are designed with the expectation that students will spend a minimum of forty-five hours for each unit of credit, including preparing for class, participating in course activities, completing assignments, and studying. Additional information on student workload expectations can be found in University Policy S12-3. See Canvas Assignments for all course assignments, instructions, due dates, and grading details.

Assignment Information

The descriptions below provide an overview of the major course assignments and assessments. Detailed instructions, grading rubrics, submission requirements, due dates, and any assignment-specific policies are available in the corresponding Canvas modules. Students are responsible for reviewing both this syllabus and the applicable Canvas materials before completing each assignment.

Syllabus Quiz (1 point)

This short quiz checks your understanding of key course policies, expectations, deadlines, and procedures outlined in the PSYC 155 syllabus. It also serves to verify active participation at the start of the semester. The quiz is open note, based directly on the syllabus, and should take no more than 10 minutes to complete in one sitting. All instructions and due dates are posted in Canvas. Students who do not complete the quiz by the Canvas due date may be dropped from the course.

Respondus LockDown Browser Practice Quiz (1 point)

This required practice quiz ensures that you can successfully access and use Respondus LockDown Browser before taking a graded exam. The quiz is low-stakes, worth 1 point, and is intended only to verify technical readiness. Completion is required prior to the first exam. Instructions and access details are posted in Canvas.

Classical and Operant Conditioning Video Worksheet (10 points)

You are required to watch the Classical and Operant Conditioning video located in the Modules section of Canvas and complete the accompanying worksheet. This assignment reinforces core learning principles and prepares you for later quizzes and exams. The worksheet must be completed individually and submitted as instructed in Canvas.

Classical Conditioning Exercise (10 points)

This assignment assesses your understanding of classical conditioning concepts from Chapter 3. Review the chapter video and supporting materials in the module before beginning. You will identify the components of classical conditioning and describe the three phases of learning using complete sentences, clearly distinguishing between conditioned and unconditioned elements. The completed assignment must be submitted in its entirety as a single PDF. See Canvas for full instructions and due dates.

Operant Conditioning Quiz (10 points)

This quiz evaluates your ability to apply operant conditioning principles from Chapter 6. Before completing the quiz, review the chapter videos and the Box of Contingent Events provided in the module. For each scenario, you will determine whether a stimulus is applied or removed, whether the behavior increases or decreases, and identify the correct type of operant conditioning. Access details and due dates are available in Canvas.

Behavioral TED Talk Analysis and Reflection (10 points each)

You will watch and analyze five instructor-selected TED Talks related to behavior, learning, and applied psychology. These reflections are designed to build critical thinking, listening, and analytic skills by connecting course concepts to real-world examples. Assignment prompts, submission instructions, and grading criteria are posted in Canvas.

Exams (3 exams, 100 points each)

There are three exams in this course, each worth 100 points. Exams assess your understanding of material from the textbook, lectures, videos, class discussions, demonstrations, and other course materials. Exams 1 and 2 will be administered in class. The Final Exam will be completed online through Canvas using Respondus LockDown Browser during the university's Final Examination Period. Additional instructions, testing requirements, and exam availability will be provided in Canvas. No make-up exams will be given except as required by university policy.

LMS Chapter Assignments (5 points per chapter, 13 chapters)

You are required to complete assigned Learning Management System (LMS) chapter assignments through Canvas by accessing the Cengage link in the course navigation. These assignments are graded based on completion and mastery of chapter content. There are no time limits, but assignments must be completed during the assigned window. No make-ups are allowed under any circumstances. You will complete LMS assignments for the chapters listed in the syllabus.

Self-Change Project (90 points total)

The Self-Change Project is a semester-long applied assignment in which you use principles of learning and behavior change to modify a real, everyday behavior of your own. Using operant conditioning and behaviorist theory, you will identify a specific behavior to increase or decrease, systematically measure it, design and implement a behavior change plan, and evaluate the results.

You will begin by defining a measurable target behavior and collecting a one-week baseline without attempting change. You will then design a behavior modification intervention using reinforcement, and when appropriate punishment, grounded in course concepts such as the Premack Principle, stimulus control, and contingency management. After implementing the intervention for one week, you will analyze behavioral data, graph your results, and reflect on outcomes, confounds, and limitations.

The final product is a formal APA-style paper that includes an introduction, literature review, methodology, results, discussion, and conclusion, supported by peer-reviewed research and behavioral data. The emphasis is on careful measurement, thoughtful application of theory, and clear scientific writing rather than perfect behavior change outcomes.

The Self-Change Project is worth 90 total points. You will submit two required low-stakes components to support your progress: Self-Change Draft 1 (5 points) and the Final Paper Rough Draft (5 points). Full instructions, rubrics, and timelines are available in the Behavior Change Project module on Canvas.

All assignments submitted on Canvas MUST be in PDF format.

Letter grades will be assigned according to the grading table:

Syllabus Quiz:	1 point
Respondus LockDown Browser Practice Quiz:	1 point
Classical and Operant Conditioning Video Worksheet:	10 points
Classical Conditioning Exercise:	10 points
Operant Conditioning Quiz:	10 points
Behavioral TED Talk Analyses (5 total, 10 points each):	50 points
LMS Chapter Assignments (13 chapters, 5 points each):	65 points
Exams (3 total, 100 points each):	300 points
Self-Change Draft 1:	5 points
Self-Change Final Paper Rough Draft:	5 points
Self-Change Project Final Paper:	90 points

Grading Scale

A: 100–94
A-: 93–90
B+: 89–87
B: 86–83
B-: 82–80
C+: 79–77
C: 76–73
C-: 72–70
D+: 69–67
D: 66–63
D-: 62–60
F: below 60

Class Policies – See Canvas Class Policies Module**Syllabus and Course Policies**

This syllabus serves as the primary guide for the course and will be followed as closely as possible. However, the instructor reserves the right to make reasonable changes to the course schedule, assignments, policies, or procedures when necessary to support student learning or in response to unforeseen circumstances. Any changes will be communicated through Canvas Announcements and, when appropriate, discussed in class.

Students are responsible for reading this syllabus, reviewing course announcements, and understanding the course expectations and policies outlined in this syllabus and the supporting information provided in Canvas. Detailed assignment instructions, grading rubrics, submission requirements, due dates, and additional course resources are available in the corresponding Canvas modules. Students are responsible for reviewing both this syllabus and the applicable Canvas materials throughout the semester.

If you have questions about any course policy, assignment, or expectation, please seek clarification before the applicable deadline.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is essential to the learning process and is expected of every student enrolled in this course. Unless otherwise specified, all work submitted must represent your own understanding and effort. Students are expected to comply with the San José State University Academic Integrity Policy and all applicable university standards.

Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, unauthorized collaboration, falsification of information, and the unauthorized use of artificial intelligence or other technologies. Suspected violations may be addressed in accordance with university policy and may be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development.

This syllabus establishes the general academic integrity expectations for the course. Additional course policies, expectations, examples, assignment-specific requirements, and guidance regarding academic integrity, plagiarism, artificial intelligence, late work, communication, and other course procedures are provided in the **Class Policies** module and other applicable modules in Canvas. These Canvas materials are incorporated into this syllabus and are considered part of the course requirements. Students are responsible for reading, understanding, and following both this syllabus and the applicable Canvas materials throughout the semester.

Students remain responsible for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of all work they submit, regardless of the tools or resources used. If you are uncertain whether a particular action or resource is permitted, ask for clarification before submitting your work.

Campus Policy in Compliance with the American Disabilities Act

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. [Presidential Directive 97-03](http://www.sjsu.edu/president/docs/directives/PD_1997-03.pdf) at http://www.sjsu.edu/president/docs/directives/PD_1997-03.pdf requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the [Accessible Education Center](http://www.sjsu.edu/aec) (AEC) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/aec> to establish a record of their disability.

Accommodation to Students' Religious Holidays

San José State University shall provide accommodation on any graded class work or activities for students wishing to observe religious holidays when such observances require students to be absent from class. It is the responsibility of the student to inform the instructor, in writing, about such holidays before the add deadline at the start of each semester. If such holidays occur before the add deadline, the student must notify the instructor, in writing, at least three days before the date that he/she will be absent. It is the responsibility of the instructor to make every reasonable effort to honor the student request without penalty, and of the student to make up the work missed. See [University Policy S14-7](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S14-7.pdf) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S14-7.pdf>.

Student Technology Resources

Computer labs for student use are available in the [Academic Success Center](http://www.sjsu.edu/at/asc/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/at/asc/> located on the 1st floor of Clark Hall and in the Associated Students Lab on the 2nd floor of the Student Union. Additional computer labs may be available in your department/college. Computers are also available in the Martin Luther King Library. A wide variety of audio-visual equipment is available for student checkout from Media Services located in IRC 112. These items include DV and HD digital camcorders; digital still cameras; video, slide and overhead projectors; DVD, CD, and audiotape players; sound systems, wireless microphones, projection screens and monitors.

SJSU Peer Connections

Peer Connections, a campus-wide resource for mentoring and tutoring, strives to inspire students to develop their potential as independent learners while they learn to successfully navigate through their university experience. You are encouraged to take advantage of their services which include course-content based tutoring, enhanced study and time management skills, more effective critical thinking strategies, decision making and problem-solving abilities, and campus resource referrals.

In addition to offering small group, individual, and drop-in tutoring for a number of undergraduate courses, consultation with mentors is available on a drop-in or by appointment basis. Workshops are offered on a wide variety of topics including preparing for the Writing Skills Test (WST), improving your learning and memory, alleviating procrastination, surviving your first semester at SJSU, and other related topics. A computer lab and study space are also available for student use in Room 600 of Student Services Center (SSC).

Peer Connections is located in three locations: SSC, Room 600 (10th Street Garage on the corner of 10th and San Fernando Street), at the 1st floor entrance of Clark Hall, and in the Living Learning Center (LLC) in Campus Village Housing Building B. Visit [Peer Connections website](http://peerconnections.sjsu.edu) at <http://peerconnections.sjsu.edu> for more information.

SJSU Writing Center

The SJSU Writing Center is located in Clark Hall, Suite 126. All Writing Specialists have gone through a rigorous hiring process, and they are well trained to assist all students at all levels within all disciplines to become better writers. In addition to one-on-one tutoring services, the Writing Center also offers workshops every semester on a variety of writing topics. To make an appointment or to refer to the numerous online resources offered through the Writing Center, visit the [Writing Center website](http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter>. For additional resources and updated information, follow the Writing Center on Twitter and become a fan of the SJSU Writing Center on Facebook.

SJSU Counseling Services

The SJSU Counseling Services is located on the corner of 7th Street and San Fernando Street, in Room 201, Administration Building. Professional psychologists, social workers, and counselors are available to provide consultations on issues of student mental health, campus climate or psychological and academic issues on an individual, couple, or group basis. To schedule an appointment or learn more information, visit [Counseling Services website](http://www.sjsu.edu/counseling) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/counseling>.

University Resources

SJSU offers many resources to students for basic needs. Talk to me, or visit the website: <https://www.sjsu.edu/sjsucares/>

Course Schedule – See Canvas homepage for due dates and times

c	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines	Assignments, Deadlines See Canvas for assignment information, due dates, and times
1	Aug 21	Course Introduction, Syllabus, and Class Expectations	Get the Book Syllabus Quiz
2	Aug 28	Classical and Operant Video	Video Sheet Due
3	Sept 4	Introduction, Chapter 1	LMS Chapter 1
4	Sept 11	Research Methods, Chapter 2	LMS Chapter 2 TED Talk 1 Due
5	Sept 18	Elicited Behaviors and Classical Conditioning, Chapter 3	LMS Chapter 3 Classical Conditioning Exercise Due
6	Sept 25	Classical Conditioning: Basic Phenomena and Various Complexities, Chapter 4	LMS Chapter 4 TED Talk 2 Due
7	Oct 2	Classical Conditioning: Underlying Processes and Practical Applications, Chapter 5	LMS Chapter 5
8	Oct 9	Exam 1 (Chapters 1-5)	Rough Draft 1 Due (Intro, Lit and Methods only)
9	Oct 16	Operant Conditioning: Introduction, Chapter 6	LMS Chapter 6 Operant Conditioning Quiz Rough Draft 1 Due (Intro, Lit and Methods only)
10	Oct 23	Schedules and Theories of Reinforcement, Chapter 7	LMS Chapter 7 TED Talk 3 Due
11	Oct 30	Extinction and Stimulus Control, Chapter 8	LMS Chapter 8 TED Talk 4 Due

12	Nov 6	Escape, Avoidance and Punishment, Chapter 9	LMS Chapter 9 Self-Change Paper Draft Due
13	Nov 13	Exam 2 (Chapters 6-9)	
14	Nov 20	Choice, Matching, and Self-Control, Chapter 10 Observational Learning and Rule-Governed Behavior, Chapter 11	LMS Chapter 10 LMS Chapter 11 TED Talk 5 Due Self-Change Paper Due
15	Nov 27 (No Class)	No Class. Thanksgiving Break	
16	Dec 4	Biological Dispositions in Learning, Chapter 12 Comparative Cognition, Chapter 13	LMS Chapter 12 LMS Chapter 13 Respondus LockDown Browser Practice Quiz
17	Finals Week	Final Exam (Chapters 10-12) - Online using Respondus LockDown Browser	