

San José State University
Psychology Department
PSYC156, Applied Behavior Analysis
Fall 2026

Instructor:	Matthew R. Capriotti, PhD
Office Location:	DMH 318
Telephone:	(408) 924-5641 (email preferred)
Email:	matthew.capriotti@sjsu.edu
Office Hours:	Tues/Thurs 1:30-2:00 or by appointment
Class Days/Time:	Tues/Thurs 12:00-1:15
Classroom:	Sweeney Hall 311
Prerequisites:	PSYC 001

MYSJSU Messaging

Course materials such as syllabus, handouts, notes, assignment instructions, etc. can be found on Canvas Learning Management System (<http://sjsu.instructure.com>). You are responsible for regularly checking Canvas to learn of any updates.

Course Description

Survey of applications of behavioral principles to problems of clinical and social importance. Topics include data-based decision making, approaches to promoting skill acquisition, and strategies for assessing and reducing problem behavior.

Course Learning Objectives (CLOs)

Upon successful completion of this course:

CLO1: Students will be able to identify, describe, and distinguish among commonly used strategies and tactics of measurement of individual human behavior (e.g., recording and graphing behavioral data).

CLO2: Students will be able to define and identify core principles of behavior and their relation to the maintenance of socially and clinically important behavior (i.e., functions of behavior).

CLO3: Students will be able to identify, describe, and distinguish among behavior-analytic procedures for reducing aberrant (or “problem”) behavior.

CLO4: Students will be able to identify, describe, and distinguish among behavior-analytic procedures for increasing desired behaviors, including acquisition of new skills.

CLO5: Students will be able to identify, describe, and distinguish among applications of applied behavior analysis in psychotherapeutic and community contexts.

CLO6: Students will be able to identify ethical and professional issues commonly encountered in the practice of applied behavior analysis.

Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)

Upon successful completion of the psychology major:

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.

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.

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.

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

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

Required Texts, Readings, and Materials

Textbook

Required Text. Miltenberger, R. G. (2019). Behavior modification: Principles and procedures. (6th Edition). Boston, MA: Cengage Learning. We are using the SIXTH edition of this textbook. There is a newer (and more expensive) edition that we will not be using.

Supplemental Readings. Supplemental required readings will consist of original-source articles from major journals in the field of applied behavior analysis (e.g., *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, *Behavior Analysis in Practice*, *Behavior Modification*) and other selected resources. These will be available on Canvas at the beginning of the semester.

iClicker. We will use iClicker polling in this course (see Participation section below). Students do not need to purchase anything to do this, but they do need to plan carefully to make sure they are configured to participate in iClicker sessions each class. Students may participate in iClicker polls using a smartphone, tablet, or laptop.

To use a smartphone, students should download the iClicker app and visit the following URL: <https://join.iclicker.com/YAVN>. Students using laptops or tablets should visit the [SJSU iClicker page](#) for instructions. If students anticipate that they will **not** have consistent access to a laptop or smartphone, or if they simply prefer not to use these technologies, they should contact the instructor to arrange an alternate means of participation.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Final Examination or Evaluation

The final exam for this course will be held Tues, 12/15/2026 from 10:45 AM -12:45 PM.

Final exams are governed by University Policy S06-4 (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S06-4.pdf>) which states that *“There shall be an appropriate final examination or evaluation at the scheduled time in every course, unless specifically exempted by the college dean who has curricular responsibility for the course.”* Consistent with this policy, final exams will only be given at alternative times if (a) there are verifiable emergency circumstances or (b) if a student has more than two exams scheduled within a 24-hour period, in which case the student must contact the instructor *at least three weeks before the last regular class meeting* to schedule an alternative exam time.

Grading Information

Grading will be based on the following assignments:

Welcome Assignment: 5 points

You will complete a two-page written welcome assignment in the first week of the class. The purpose of this assignment is to orient you to the course and to inspire you to think about what you want to get from the class, as well as the unique perspective that you, as an individual, will bring to our class. In this assignment you will respond to several specific prompts. Points will be awarded based on the extent to which you respond to the questions provided in the instructions.

Participation: 25 points (27x1, 2 extra credit points possible)

Starting T 8/25, you will respond to 1-5 clicker questions during each class period. These will be questions mixed into lectures and activities to (a) assess your comprehension of material that has just been covered, (b) gauge your engagement during in-class activities, and/or (c) gauge your reactions to class material (e.g., How engaging? How clearly presented? How well paced?). Questions may be administered at any point during the class period, including the beginning and end of the class. These questions will be graded on participation, not accuracy. Students who participate in all clicker questions during a class period will receive 1 participation point for that day. Students who participate in some, but not all, clicker questions on a given day will receive 0.5 participation points for that class. Students who do not participate in any clicker questions on a given day will receive 0 points for that day. The instructor reserves the right to substitute a brief, written assignment, graded in a similar fashion, should Clicker be unavailable due to technical issues, or if another mode of participation is better suited for class goals that day (e.g., having students submit questions for an upcoming guest speaker). Students are responsible for ensuring that they have a functional way to participate in clicker sessions each class (see p. 2 of this syllabus). No credit will be awarded to students who do not submit clicker responses due to technical difficulties, running out of battery, etc. will not be considered an excuse for failing to submit. You are encouraged to regularly check Canvas to ensure that your responses are registering correctly.

Quizzes: 100 points (5x25, lowest one dropped) CLOs 1-5

There will be 5 quizzes throughout the semester, each based on a list of learning objectives (similar to a study guide, but more specific about what you will need to do on the quiz). Your top 4 quiz scores will count toward your final grade. Each quiz will be worth 25 points. The quiz questions will emphasize the learning objectives, but other questions may be included. Quiz questions may consist of short answer, true/false, multiple choice,

and/or fill-in-the-blank items. Quizzes will be given in the first 45 mins of the class period, unless otherwise specified. If you arrive late to a quiz, you will not receive extended time.

Final Exam: 40 points CLOs 1-5

There will be a final exam worth 40 points. These will be similar in format to quizzes, but about 1.5-2 times the length. The final exam will be cumulative, and it will assess your knowledge of core concepts and their real-world applications. Prior to the final exam, the instructor will specify which points on each study guide will be emphasized on the final exam.

TOTAL POINTS: 170

Definition of a Credit Hour

Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, *for each unit of credit*, a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the course (normally 3 hours per unit per week with 1 of the hours used for lecture) for instruction or preparation/studying or course related activities including but not limited to internships, labs, clinical practica. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.

Over the fifteen-week semester, students are expected to dedicate 135 hours to a three-unit course, inclusive of attending lectures, reading course materials, etc. In other words, students are expected to dedicate 9 hours a week to this course, inclusive of all course activities.

Determination of Grades

Total points earned in the class will be divided by 170 and converted to a percentage. Percent grades will be converted to letter grades using the scale below. Grades will not be rounded; for example, a percentage grade of 96.9% would earn a final grade of A, not A+:

Letter Grade	Percent
A+	97 or higher
A	93 to 96.99
A-	90 to 92.99
B+	87 to 89.99
B	83 to 86.99
B-	80 to 82.99
C+	77 to 79.99
C	73 to 76.99
C-	70 to 72.99
D+	67 to 69.99
D	63 to 66.99
D-	60 to 62.99
F	<60

Extra credit opportunities may be provided for students up to 4 grade points (~1.8 percentage points) of the total course grade. No more than 4 total grade points may be earned from these assignments and extra participation points combined. For opportunities involving attendance at an event held at a fixed time (e.g., attending a research talk), a functionally equivalent alternative will be made available for students who cannot attend due to

a conflict with class or work schedules. *All extra assignments will be made available to the entire class; the instructor will not arrange extra credit opportunities for individual students.*

Late work: Because the lowest quiz score is dropped and there are several “extra” participation points built in, late work is not accepted in this class. Students who miss quizzes for other reasons will receive a zero for that quiz and may use this as their “dropped” quiz score.

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in this class. Examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to cheating on exams and assignments and turning in work that is not your own (in part or in whole). Notes, textbooks, and other resources may **not** be used on quizzes. Defrauding the iClicker system to attempt to register responses when not in class also counts as academic dishonesty. Note that the system has location verification, so attempts to do this will be easily detected. All cases of suspected and/or confirmed academic dishonesty will be reported to the University, per University policy. Penalties for academic dishonesty may range from a grade of zero on the assignment in question to expulsion from the University, depending on severity of the infraction. See University Policies (below) for full info.

Classroom Protocol

You are expected to arrive on time to each class meeting and attend to what is going on in the classroom. Each class will begin with a participation opportunity (factored into your grade), such that arriving promptly and attending until the end of each class will directly help you maximize your grade.

You are expected to use laptops and/or tablets in a professional manner, if you choose to do so. This means that you use them for class-related purposes, and not for other things. If I notice this happening, I reserve the right to restrict permission to use these devices, either for an individual student(s) or for the entire class. Lectures should not be recorded without my prior permission; see me if you wish to discuss this.

You are expected to behave in a respectful manner toward your peers and instructor. When differing opinions emerge in class discussions, I expect you to maintain a civil and professional tone. You can expect me (the instructor) to do the same. If you engage in behavior that is overtly disrespectful, disruptive to the class, threatening, or harmful toward others in the room, you may be asked to leave the class for the day.

You are expected to check Canvas and email regularly, and to communicate professionally through this means. Please use Canvas only (not email) for electronic course-related communication. I expect you to communicate professionally via Canvas, just as in class.

Unforeseen Changes to Class Meeting Schedules

This course will adhere to University policies around class meeting schedules. We will meet in person at each scheduled class meeting time, with the exception of University-sanctioned holidays and non-instructional days. Students are expected to attend and participate in all class meetings. Should outside circumstances (e.g., weather events, faculty strikes, campus-wide power outages) require a class meeting to be cancelled, I will notify you as soon as possible about the change and alternative work assigned in lieu of our scheduled class meeting.

University Policies

Per University Policy S16-9, university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc. will be available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs' [Syllabus Information web page](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>

PSYC156, Applied Behavior Analysis, Fall 2026 Schedule

This is a tentative schedule of lecture topics, assignment due dates, and quiz/exam dates. The instructor reserves the right to change any aspect of the schedule, topics, readings, and quiz dates with fair notice. Any changes in the content or timing of assignments or quizzes will be given at least one week in advance.

Note: Where only chapter numbers are given, readings are from the Miltenberger text; Q=Quiz

Week	Date	Topic	Readings, Quizzes, and Assignments Due
0-1	8/20, 8/25, 8/27	Intro and Overview of ABA, Ethical and Professional/Career Issues (CLO 6)	Syllabus, Ch. 1., Baer, Wolf, Risley (1968) Th 8/27, Welcome assignment due
2	9/1, 9/3	Measuring and Tracking Behavior (CLO1)	Ch. 2-3
3	9/8, 9/10	Behavioral Principles and Functions I: Reinforcement (CLO2)	Ch. 4 R 9/10, Quiz 1 (Chs1-3, intro, measuring, tracking);
4	9/15, 9/17	Behavioral Principles and Functions II: Reinforcement continued & Extinction (CLO2)	Ch. 5, 14
5	9/22, 9/24	Behavioral Principles and Functions III: Punishment (CLO2)	Ch 6
6	9/29, 10/1	Behavioral Principles and Functions IV: Assessing Behavioral Functions (CLO2)	Ch. 13., Iwata et al. (1994) Th 10/1, Quiz 2 (Ch. 4-6, Rft, EXT, Punishment)
7	10/6, 10/8	Behavioral Principles and Functions V: Respondent Conditioning	Ch. 8
8	10/13, 10/15	Behavior Change Strategies I: Differential Reinforcement + Extinction (CLO3); Behavior Change Strategies II: Stimulus Control and Generalization	Ch. 14-15; 7
9	10/20, 10/22	Behavior Change Strategies III: Shaping and Chaining (CLO4)	Ch. 9-10, Article TBD Th 10/22, Q3 (respondent conditioning, FA, DRO stimulus control and generalization)
10	10/27, 10/29	Behavior Change Strategies IV: Prompting and Rule-Governed Behavior	Ch. 11; Biglan entry on RGB;
11	11/3, 11/5	Psychotherapeutic and Community Applications I: Token Economies, Exposure-Based Therapies, Third-Wave Behavior Therapies	Ch. 22, 24, 25 Th 11/5- Quiz 4- Shaping, Chaining, Prompting, Rules

12	11/10, 11/12	Psychotherapeutic and Community Applications II: Student-Nominated Topics	TBD
13-14	11/17, 11/19, 11/24	Psychotherapeutic and Community Applications III: Student-Nominated Topics	TBD
15	12/1, 12/3	Ethics, Culture, and Professional Issues in Behavior Analysis	T 12/1- Quiz 5- Psychotherapeutic and Community Applications BACB Guidelines, Martin & Pear, Ch. 30,
Final Exam	Tues 12/15, 10:45-12:45		Final Exam

Supplemental References (Will be provided on Canvas)

- Baer, D. M., Wolf, M. M., & Risley, T. R. (1968). Some current dimensions of applied behavior analysis. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 1, 91-97.
- Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB) Behavior Analyst Certification Board professional and ethical compliance code for behavior analysts (2014). Retrieved from <https://bacb.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/160321-compliance-code-english.pdf>
- Iwata, B. A., Dorsey, M. F., Slifer, K. J., Bauman, K. E., & Richman, G. S. (1994). Toward a functional analysis of self-injury. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 27, 197-209.
- Martin, G., & Pear, J. J. (2007). Ethical Issues (Ch.30). *Behavior modification: What it is and how to do it* (8th ed). Psychology Press.
- Van Houten, R., Nau, P., & Marini, Z. (1980). An analysis of public posting in reducing speeding behavior on an urban highway. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 13, 383-395.
- Veazey, S. E., Valentino, A. L., Low, A. I., McElroy, A. R., & LeBlanc, L. A. (2016) Teaching feminine hygiene skills to young females with autism spectrum disorder and intellectual disability. *Behavior Analysis in Practice*, 9, 184-189.

Parking lot for articles we may incorporate

- Ayvazo, S., & Naveh, M. E. (2024). Self-monitoring and public posting improve competitive youth cyclists' training performance. *Journal of applied behavior analysis*, 57(2), 394-407.
- Wiley, J. C., Miltenberger, R. G., & Tai, S. (2024). Behavioral skills training produces acquisition and generalization of run-blocking skills of high school football players. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 57(4), 926-935.
- Gelino, B. W., Graham, M. E., Strickland, J. C., Glatzer, H. W., Hursh, S. R., & Reed, D. D. (2024). Using behavioral economics to optimize safer undergraduate late-night transportation. *Journal of applied behavior analysis*, 57(1), 117-130.
- Salzer, A. R., Dozier, C. L., DiGennaro Reed, F. D., & Reed, D. D. (2024). Functional analysis and treatment of problem behavior by domesticated canines. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*.