



Department of Applied Psychology  
Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology (GSAPP)  
Rutgers University  
New Brunswick, New Jersey  
Spring 2025

**18:820:537:01 Theoretical and Philosophical Foundations of Behavior Analysis**

Credits: 3

Level: Graduate

Thursdays, 6:15-8:45pm

Rutgers Center for Adult Autism Services; Workrooms A&B

Instructor: Julia Iannaccone, Ph.D., BCBA-D (she/her)

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Office Hours: By appointment

\*The instructor will make every reasonable effort to meet with students whenever necessary.

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**Purpose:** This course emphasizes the theoretical foundations, philosophical framework, scientific principles, and fundamental concepts of applied behavior analysis (ABA) and contrasts the worldview of behavior analysts with other perspectives inside and outside psychology. Students will demonstrate competence in articulating the philosophical tenets of behaviorism and the theoretical approaches to understanding behavior, as well as the ability to interpret behavior through the lens of behavioral analysis concepts and principles. Practical applications to behavior analytic problem solving and case conceptualization in applied settings will be emphasized.

**Outcomes:** This course satisfies the BACB Course Content requirements for Section A of the 5<sup>th</sup> Edition Task List (45 hours). By the end of the course, you will be able to:

1. Identify the goals of behavior analysis as a science (i.e. description, prediction, control) (A-1)
2. Describe the philosophical assumptions underlying the science of behavior analysis (e.g., selectionism, determinism, empiricism, parsimony, pragmatism) (A-2)
3. Explain behavior from the perspective of radical behaviorism (A-3)
4. Distinguish among behaviorism, the experimental analysis of behavior, applied behavior analysis, and professional practice guided by the science of behavior analysis (A-4)
5. Identify and describe dimensions of applied behavior analysis (A-5)

**Assignments and Evaluation Method:**

**Objectives** – Each week you will be given objectives. These will outline key terms you should be able to define, explain, and discuss, as well as key concepts from articles you should be able to explain and discuss. You are responsible for completing assigned readings and the provided objectives for each class period. Objectives will be posted on Canvas prior to class. They are designed to help guide your reading and direct your attention to important concepts. Answers to objectives will not be collected or graded each week, however they will be directly linked to material covered on quizzes and exams. Thus, providing high-quality, thoughtful responses in the objectives is to your advantage.

**Quizzes (15%)** – At the start of each class period there will be a quiz. Each quiz will contain 5 open-ended questions. Quiz questions will be directly linked to the objectives for the relevant week. A practice quiz (ungraded) will be given on week 1 and all subsequent quizzes (starting week 2) will be graded. At the end of the semester the lowest 2 quiz grades will be dropped (if you miss a class, the 0 for that week will be dropped – this will account for up to 2 missed classes).

**Participation (10%)** – Discussions will occur throughout each class. Participation in each class's discussions will be graded on the scale below. At the end of the semester the lowest 2 participation grades will be dropped (if you miss a class, the 0 for that week will be dropped – this will account for up to 2 missed classes).

Criteria/Grade	100	85	75	65	55
<b>Participation</b>	Fully actively engages discussion.	Generally attentive and participatory.	Limited attention and participation, but no distracting behaviors.	Poor/no participation. Inattentive as evidenced by distracting behaviors. Takes frequent or long breaks	Absent

**SAFMED (15%)** – information for SAFMED cards will be uploaded to Canvas with instructions for daily practice. Beginning on class 3, the last 15min of class will be reserved for SAFMED testing for 5-8 students (number of students determined at beginning of semester and determined by class size). The students tested on a specific week will be randomly selected without replacement until 3 tests have taken place.

SAFMED testing is graded out of a possible 10 points. To receive a 10, you must read 6 SAFMEDs correctly within 1 minute (from a typed deck belonging to the instructor). Incorrect or skipped SAFMEDS will not count against you (although the time to read them will). If you answer 5 correct, your grade will be a 9; answering 4 correct results in an 8; answering 3 correct results in a 7; answering 2 correct results in a 6; answering 1 correct results in a 5; answering none correct results in a 0. *If you read 7-8 correctly, one point of extra credit will be added to your lowest SAFMED grade; 9+ correct results in 2 points extra credit (or to your lowest counted quiz if you have full credit on SAFMEDs).*

**Written Exams (40%)** – There will be a mid-term exam on week 8 and a final exam at the end of the semester. Exam questions will be directly linked to the objectives. A study guide for each exam will be provided.

**Oral Exam (20%)** – There will be an oral (spoken) exam at the end of the semester (week 13) to measure your ability to coherently discuss key concepts from class in spoken conversation. Oral exam questions will be directly linked to the objectives starting with “Be able to **discuss...**”. A rubric/grading sheet for answering questions will be provided.

### **Missed Work**

If, due to an absence, you miss:

- A quiz – this will count towards your two lowest quiz scores being dropped
- A participation grade – this will count towards your two lowest participation grades being dropped
- SAFMED testing – if you were randomly selected during a class you missed, you will be selected for the next class
- An exam – exam makeups will only be offered for extenuating circumstances; you will need to schedule a time with the professor to make it up.

The final grade will be determined and computed based on the following:

- a) Quizzes: 15%
- b) Participation: 10%
- c) SAFMEDs: 15%
- d) Written Exams (Midterm and Final): 40%
- e) Oral Exam: 20%

### **Grades and Grading Policy**

Grade	Description	Numerical Equivalent
A	Outstanding	90-100 (4.0)
B+	Intermediate Grade	87-89 (3.5)
B	Good	80-86 (3.0)
C**	Average	70-79 (2.0)*Grades of C or lower do not count toward graduation
F	Failure	69 or below (0.0)
INC	Incomplete	
S	Satisfactory	
U	Unsatisfactory	
PA	Pass	
NC	No credit given	

**Program requirement:** All students in Applied Psychology courses must achieve a grade of B or better and maintain a GPA of 3.0, or academic remediation will be enforced.

### **Required Text (available on Canvas in Reading List or Files)**

1. Johnston, J.M. (2021). *Talking about behavior: Radical behaviorism for ABA practitioners* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Sloan. [https://sloanpublishing.com/talking\\_about\\_behavior](https://sloanpublishing.com/talking_about_behavior)
2. Other readings will be placed in a shared folder available on Canvas.

### **Class Schedule**

*\*Schedule subject to changes, you will be notified of any changes*

### **Week 1 (1/23/25): Introduction, Overview, & The Seven Dimensions**

*Participation 1 & Quiz 1 (practice quiz; ungraded)*

#### **Textbook Reading**

Preface — Johnston, J.M. (2021). *Talking about behavior: Radical behaviorism for ABA practitioners* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Sloan

#### **Article Readings**

Baer, D.M., Wolf, M.M., & Risley, T.R. (1968). Some current dimensions of applied behavior analysis. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 1(1), 91-97.

### **Week 2 (1/30/25): Determinism**

*Quiz 2 & Participation 2 (optional: practice SAFMED)*

#### **Textbook Reading**

Chapter 1 — Johnston, J.M. (2021). *Talking about behavior: Radical behaviorism for ABA practitioners* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Sloan.

#### **Article Readings**

Marr, J. (1982). On Terms: Determinism. *The Behavior Analyst*, 5(2), 205-207.

Slife, B. D., Yanchar, S. C., & Williams, B. (1999). Conceptions of determinism in radical behaviorism: A taxonomy. *Behavior and Philosophy*, 27, 75-96.

### **Week 3 (2/6/25): Verbal Behavior**

*Quiz 3 & Participation 3; SAFMED testing begins (round 1)*

#### **Textbook Reading**

Chapter 2 — Johnston, J.M. (2021). *Talking about behavior: Radical behaviorism for ABA practitioners* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Sloan.

#### **Article Readings**

Chomsky N. (1959). A review of B. F. Skinner's Verbal Behavior. *Language*, 35, 26–58).

MacCorquodale, K. (1970). On Chomsky's review of Skinner's Verbal behavior. *Journal of the experimental analysis of behavior*, 13(1), 83-99.

### **Week 4 (2/13/25): Mentalism, Mechanism, and the Mind-Body Problem**

*Quiz 4 & Participation 4; SAFMED testing (round 1)*

#### **Textbook Reading**

Chapter 3 — Johnston, J.M. (2021). *Talking about behavior: Radical behaviorism for ABA practitioners* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Sloan

#### **Article Readings**

Pérez-Álvarez, M. (2009). The four causes of behavior: Aristotle and Skinner. *International Journal of Psychology and Psychological Therapy*, 9, 45-57.

Moore, J. (2010). What do mental terms mean? *The Psychological Record*, 60, 705-707 (**and only pages 705-707!**)

### **Week 5 (2/20/25): Public vs. Private Events**

*Quiz 5 & Participation 5; SAFMED testing (round 1)*

#### **Textbook Readings**

Chapter 4 — Johnston, J.M. (2021). *Talking about behavior: Radical behaviorism for ABA practitioners* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Sloan.

#### **Article Readings**

Baum, W. M. (2011). Behaviorism, private events, and the molar view of behavior. *The Behavior Analyst*, 34, 185-200.

Moore, J. (2013). Methodological behaviorism from the standpoint of a radical behaviorist. *The Behavior Analyst*, 36, 197-208.

### **Week 6 (2/27/25): The Deep Nature of Reinforcement**

*Quiz 6 & Participation 6; SAFMED testing (round 2)*

#### **Textbook Reading**

Chapter 5 — Johnston, J.M. (2021). *Talking about behavior: Radical behaviorism for ABA practitioners* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Sloan.

#### **Article Readings**

Adams, M. A. (2000). Reinforcement theory and behavior analysis. *Behavioral Development Bulletin*, 9(1), 3–6.

Klatt, K. P., & Morris, E. K. (2001). The Premack principle, response deprivation, and establishing operations. *The Behavior Analyst*, 24(2), 173–180.

### **Week 7 (3/6/25): Cognition, Knowledge, & Understanding**

*Quiz 7 & Participation 7; SAFMED testing (round 2)*

#### **Textbook Reading**

Chapter 6 — Johnston, J.M. (2021). *Talking about behavior: Radical behaviorism for ABA practitioners* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Sloan.

#### **Article Readings**

Gross, A.C., & Fox, E.J. (2009). Relational frame theory: an overview of the controversy. *Analysis of Verbal Behavior*, 25(1):87-98.

Skinner, B.F. (1977). Why I am not a cognitive psychologist. *Behaviorism*, 5, 1-10.

### **Week 8 (3/13/25): Written Midterm Exam**

### **Week 9 (3/27/25): Behavioral Responsibility**

*Quiz 8 & Participation 8; SAFMED testing (round 2)*

#### **Textbook Reading**

Chapter 7 — Johnston, J.M. (2021). *Talking about behavior: Radical behaviorism for ABA practitioners* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Sloan.

#### **Article Readings**

Biglan, A. (2016). The need for a more effective science of cultural practices. *The Behavior Analyst*, 39, 97-107.

Reed, D.D. (2015). Applied behavior science goes to scale: A review of Biglan's *The Nurture Effect*. *The Behavior Analyst*, 38, 309-320.

### **Week 10 (4/3/25): Ethics, Rights, & Values**

*Quiz 9 & Participation 9; SAFMED testing (round 3)*

#### **Textbook Reading**

Chapter 8 — Johnston, J.M. (2021). *Talking about behavior: Radical behaviorism for ABA practitioners* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Sloan.

#### **Article Readings**

Moore, J. (2003). Behavior analysis, mentalism, and the path to social justice. *The Behavior Analyst*, 26, 181-193.

Saini, V., & Vance, H. (2020). Systemic racism and cultural selection: A preliminary analysis of metacontingencies. *Behavior and Social Issues*, 29, 52–63.

### **Week 11 (4/10/25): Selection by Consequences**

*Quiz 10 & Participation 10; SAFMED testing (round 3)*

#### **Textbook Reading**

Chapter 9 — Johnston, J.M. (2021). *Talking about behavior: Radical behaviorism for ABA practitioners* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Sloan

#### **Article Readings**

Leão, M. F. F. C., Laurenti, C., & Haydu, V. B. (2016). Darwinism, Radical Behaviorism, and the role of variation in Skinnerian explaining behavior. *Behavior Analysis: Research and Practice*, 16, 1-11.

Skinner, B. F. (1981). Selection by consequences. *Science*, 213 (501-504).

### **Week 12 (4/17/25): Radical Behaviorism**

*Quiz 11 & Participation 11; SAFMED testing (round 3)*

#### **Textbook Reading**

Chapter 10 — Johnston, J.M. (2021). *Talking about behavior: Radical behaviorism for ABA practitioners* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Sloan.

#### **Article Readings**

Araiba, S. (2020). Current diversification of behaviorism. *Perspectives on behavior science*, 43(1), 157-175.

Nuzzolili, A.E., & Diller, J.W. (2015). How Hume's philosophy informed radical behaviorism. *The Behavior Analyst*, 38, 115-125.

### **Week 13 (4/24/25): Oral Exam**

### **Week 14 (5/1/25): Written Final Exam**

## **GSAPP and Applied Dept. Policies**

**Important Dates:** Add/Drop ends 1/30/25

### **Attendance and Participation:**

Attendance and class participation are a major part of this class. You are expected to attend all classes and arrive on time. *Only two (2) excused/unexcused absences are permitted. Missing more than 2 classes will result in a 5%-point deduction for each additional day of absence from your final grade point.* If you are forced to miss an excessive amount of classes, you will be encouraged to withdraw from the class. Students who arrive to class more than 15 minutes after the class has started are considered tardy and will be marked absent if they arrive more than 30 minutes after class has started. After 3 late arrivals, an unexcused absence will be marked in your record. The only excused absences are those that are serious or required (e.g., personal medical emergencies or serious illness/injury; death or serious illness in the family; military duties; jury duty). If you miss class, you will be responsible for obtaining any missed material from a classmate.

### **Computer/Cell Phone Use in Class**

If students are expected to send or receive urgent e-mails, texts, or calls during class, their unanticipated and urgent needs should be communicated to and approved by the instructor prior to class. All cell phones should be turned off or in silent mode. All computing devices should be used only for the purpose of class-related activities.

**Rutgers University Mission:** As the premier comprehensive public research university in the state's system of higher education, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, has the threefold mission of

- providing for the instructional needs of New Jersey's citizens through its undergraduate, graduate, and continuing education programs;
- conducting the cutting-edge research that contributes to the medical, environmental, social, and cultural well-being of the state, as well as aiding the economy and the state's businesses and industries; and
- performing public service in support of the needs of the citizens of the state and its local, county, and state governments.

Each component of the university's mission reinforces and supports the other two.

As the University of New Jersey®, Rutgers is dedicated to teaching that meets the highest standards of excellence, to conducting research that breaks new ground, and to providing services, solutions, and clinical care that help individuals and the local, national, and global communities where they live.

**GSAPP Mission:** The mission of GSAPP is threefold: education, research/scholarship, and public service. Its goal is to prepare well-educated, qualified, and competent direct-service psychologists who have a special commitment to direct community involvement and to underserved populations--professionals who can integrate scientific knowledge with innovation in the delivery of psychological services to individuals, families, groups, and organizations. Professionals receiving a doctoral degree in psychology should be capable of extending psychological knowledge and exhibiting the high level of analytic skills and theoretical understanding needed to use existing and emerging psychological knowledge.

**Core Values.** We are guided by four core values that are apparent in our learning environment, centers, and clinics:

1. **Academic excellence** in preparing students for careers in clinical and school psychology.

2. Commitment to **social justice** and helping **underserved populations**.
3. **Diversity** of students trained, approaches used, theoretical orientations followed, and populations served.
4. **Knowledge generation and dissemination** using contemporary research approaches.

**Applied Psychology Statement:** The Department of Applied Psychology embraces the mission of the school by offering instruction that has an emphasis on civic and global citizenship, social justice, and cultural diversity. Our programs provide students with knowledge needed to understand individual and collective behaviors; develop quantitative and qualitative statistical analysis and research design needed to analyze the corresponding physical and environmental contributors to human behavior; and a beginning understanding of the analysis and treatment of behavior problems and disorders.

Our programs prepare students with the requisite theoretical knowledge; critical thinking and problem-solving skills needed to successfully participate in employment or scholastic activities. Students will have opportunities to pursue scholarly activities that prepares them to successfully compete for admissions into doctoral level psychology and related academic programs, and pursue master's level career pathways through available concentration and certificate. In general, students will acquire a knowledge base grounded in psychological theory and experiential learning (research or practicum) designed to further advance their personal and professional career development.

### **Academic Integrity**

All Rutgers students should review and adhere to the University principles of academic integrity, available at: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-at-rutgers/>

**APA Citation Style.** All papers MUST be written using the APA style (7th ed.).

### **Student Resources**

**For more information visit:** <https://gsapp.rutgers.edu/current-students/important-links>

### **Accommodations due to Disability**

If you seek accommodations due to a documented disability, you may arrange for these through the Office of Disability Services, Kreeger Learning Center, 151 College Avenue; [dfoffice@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:dfoffice@rci.rutgers.edu) or you can visit: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>.

**Title IX:** <http://compliance.rutgers.edu/resources/resources-for-facultystaff/>

**Counseling services.** Students often experience personal problems or difficulties during the term that may interfere with learning and their daily activities. If you or someone you know needs to talk to someone regarding such personal issues, the University provides free counseling services through the Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) and their information can be found at: <http://psychologicalservices.rutgers.edu>. They also offer a number of useful workshops for general stress management and techniques for promoting mental health. If you have any questions about CAPS or other services, I am happy to speak with you privately.

### **Intellectual Property**

Lectures and materials utilized in this course, including but not limited to videocasts, podcasts, visual presentations, assessments, and assignments, are protected by United States copyright laws as well as Rutgers University policy. As the instructor of this course, I possess sole copyright ownership. You are permitted to take notes for personal use or to provide to a classmate also currently enrolled in this course. Under no other circumstances is distribution of

recorded or written materials associated with this course permitted to any internet site or similar information-sharing platform without my express written consent. Doing so is a violation of the university's [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

Similarly, these copyright protections extend to original papers you produce for this course. In the event that I seek to share your work further, I will first obtain your written consent to do so. Finally, as the instructor for this course, I have the responsibility to protect students' right to privacy. Classroom recordings of students will therefore be treated as educational records under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the U.S. federal law that governs access to educational information and records. Instructors and students must provide notification if any part of online sessions are to be recorded, and such recordings *cannot be circulated outside the course*.

### **Respect for Diversity**

It is my goal that students from all backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that the students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender identity, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally, or for other students or student groups.

*Important Note:* It is imperative that there be an atmosphere of trust and safety in the classroom. I will attempt to foster an environment in which each class member is able to hear and respect each other. It is critical that each class member show respect for all worldviews expressed in class. It is expected that some of the material in this course may evoke strong emotions, please be respectful of others' emotions and be mindful of your own. Please let me know if something said or done in the classroom, by either myself or other students, is particularly troubling or causes discomfort or offense. While our intention may not be to cause discomfort or offense, the impact of what happens throughout the course is not to be ignored and is something that I consider to be very important and deserving of attention. If and when this occurs, there are several ways to alleviate some of the discomfort or hurt you may experience:

1. Discuss the situation privately with me. I am always open to listening to students' experiences and want to work with students to find acceptable ways to process and address the issue.
2. Discuss the situation with the class. Chances are there is at least one other student in the class who had a similar response to the material. Discussion enhances the ability for all class participants to have a fuller understanding of context and impact of course material and class discussions.
3. Notify me of the issue through another source such as your advisor, a trusted faculty member, or a peer. If for any reason you do not feel comfortable discussing the issue directly with me, I encourage you to seek out another, more comfortable avenue to address the issue.

*-This statement was adapted from Lynn Hernandez, Behavioral and Social Sciences, School of Public Health, Brown University*