



Unique Applications of Applied Behavior Analysis

Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology (GSAPP)

Rutgers University, New Brunswick

Credits: 3, Level: Graduate

18:820:596:01, Fall 2025

Wednesdays 6:15-8:45pm

Nelson Hall D340

Instructor: Meghan A. Deshais, Ph.D., BCBA-D

Office: Nelson D313

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Office Hours: The instructor will make every reasonable effort to meet with students whenever necessary.

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.

Course Description: This course will provide an overview of unique, specialty applications of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) beyond its well-known application to intellectual and developmental disabilities. Principles of operant and respondent learning have been successfully leveraged to address a variety of socially important problems in public health, education, pediatrics, and animal welfare. Examining unique applications of ABA will offer students an opportunity to fortify their existing knowledge of operant and respondent learning principles as well as explore potential training and career pathways.

Objectives for the course:

- Students will be able to describe unique specialty areas of Applied Behavior Analysis.
- Students will be able to identify behavioral principles at work in specialty areas of ABA application by drawing on their existing knowledge of operant and respondent learning.

Assessments:

Readings

You are responsible for completing all the assigned readings each week and coming to class prepared to discuss them.

Weekly Quizzes

Each week you will complete a short quiz based on the assigned readings and materials for that week at the start of class.

Participation

During class we will have group discussions about the assigned material each week. Discussion will be an important aspect of this course, and you are expected to contribute at least 1 novel comment/question per class period and participate in group activities.

Area Paper

You will write a 3-5 page paper focused on a specific topic from a specialty area of ABA application covered in this course using APA-approved formatting (12-point font, 1-inch margins, double-spaced). Your topic should be specific enough that you can identify at least 3 articles. You should discuss no more than 5 articles in your paper. Your paper should synthesize the identified articles and describe the behavioral concepts/principles leveraged by researchers and clinicians working in this area to promote behavior change. You will submit a topic area for approval in Week 10.

Clarity is the most important feature of good writing. You want your audience to understand the points you are making without working too hard. It is better to write in a clear, straightforward manner than it is to use a bunch of fancy, GRE exam words. It is also important to proofread your writing because missing words, spelling errors, and grammatical mistakes negatively impact clarity. A rubric is on Canvas. You will receive full points if you achieve the following:

- **Content and Understanding** - Demonstrate excellent understanding of the chosen ABA specialty area; research is well-integrated, accurate, and comprehensive; shows strong grasp of behavioral concepts and how they are applied in practice.
- **Research Integration and Evidence** - Use multiple relevant, high-quality sources; integrates research smoothly with clear synthesis (not just a list of findings).
- **Application of Behavioral Concepts/Principles** - Accurately identify and clearly explain relevant ABA concepts/principles; directly link them to real-world application in the specialty area.
- **Writing Clarity and Organization** - Writing is exceptionally clear, logical, and well-organized; sentences concise; paragraphs flow smoothly with strong transitions.
- **Mechanics, Grammar, and APA Style** - Nearly error-free; correct APA formatting (title page, references, in-text citations); proper font, margins, spacing.

TED Talk Presentation

Each student will deliver a 10-minute TED Talk-style presentation summarizing a research article from a specialty area of application. It cannot be an article assigned in this course. You will select an article and submit it to me for approval in Week 6. Your presentation should situate the article in the existing literature, provide an overview of the methods and results of the study, and explicitly identify the behavioral concepts employed in the study procedures. Your presentation should be dynamic and well-rehearsed. I will stop you at the 10-min mark, any content not covered will be considered missing. If you choose to use PowerPoint slides, you are limited to 2 slides that can contain images, figures, and MINIMAL text. You should be prepared to answer questions from the audience. Presentations will occur during Weeks 13 and 14 of the course. A rubric is on Canvas. You will receive full points if you achieve the following:

- **Research Overview** - Demonstrate excellent understanding of the research article; situate it clearly in the existing literature; provide accurate, thorough summary of methods and results
- **Identify Behavioral Concepts** - Accurately identify key ABA principles in the study and explain how they are applied.
- **Presentation Delivery** - Presentation is dynamic, engaging, confident, and well-rehearsed; clear voice, good pacing, maintains audience interest. If slides are used, they follow guidelines (≤ 2 slides, minimal text, visuals/figures used effectively to support talk).

Grading:

Assessment Tool (Category)	Percentage
Weekly Quizzes	50%
Participation	10%
Area Paper	20%
TED Talk Presentation	15%
TED Talk Article Selection & Area Paper Topic Selection	5%

Total	100%
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Standards: The following grading standards will be used in this class.

Grade	Description	Numerical Equivalent
A	Outstanding	89.5-100 (4.0)
B+	Intermediate grade	86.5-89.4 (3.5)
B	Good	79.5-86.4 (3.0)
C	Grades of <u>C</u> do not count toward graduation	69.5-79.4 (2.0)
F	Failing	69.4 or below (0.0)
INC	Incomplete	

All MAP and Graduate Certificate in ABA students must achieve a grade of B or better and maintain a GPA of 3.0, or academic remediation will be enforced.

GSAPP and Applied Dept. Policies

Important Dates: Add/Drop ends September 15, 2025

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 full letter grade reduction of your final grade.* Additional absences will result in additional letter-grade reductions. If you are forced to miss an excessive number of classes, you will be encouraged to withdraw from the class. Students who arrive to class more than 10 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. If you miss class, you will be responsible for obtaining any missed material from a classmate (hence the identification of a buddy on the first day of class).

Computer/Cell Phone Use in Class

Laptops are not permitted during class unless the instructor specifically asks you to take them out for a class activity. 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. Unless you have special permission from the instructor to keep your phone out, it should remain in your bag.

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/> Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com (directly or via learning management system, i.e. Sakai, Blackboard, Canvas, Moodle) for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the Usage Policy posted on the Turnitin.com site.

Students who use ChatGPT or similar tools on assignments without permission, or who use them in improper ways, are violating the academic integrity rules of Rutgers University. Any assignments deemed to violate the integrity rules of Rutgers University will receive a zero.

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 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*.

GSAPP Diversity Statement

The Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology (GSAPP) at Rutgers University-New Brunswick is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). We view individuals from a variety of backgrounds, lived-experiences, identities, and perspectives across our community members as critical to our threefold mission of world-class education, scholarship, and public service. We aim to honor diversity through a variety of means, such as inclusive groups, events, initiatives, curricula, and our organizational composition. We strive to create and maintain a safe space in which all voices are heard and valued, consistent with Rutgers University's Beloved Community. GSAPP acknowledges the current, historical, and systemic practices that have been used to marginalize and oppress some identities and give power and privilege to others in and beyond the United States. Additionally, we are keenly aware of the destructive effects, including on mental health and personal well-being, of prejudice, stigma, microaggressions, and violence in all its forms. We engage in a critical examination of our own biases and behaviors, both past and

present. We utilize evolving methods to address, incorporate, and celebrate DEI through our scholarship, service, and training of future health service professionals.

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

Pronouns

My pronouns are she/her/hers. You will have an opportunity to share your pronouns with me in the *Getting To Know You Quiz*. If you would prefer to be called by your name only (no pronouns), please share that with me. If your preference changes at any point during the semester, please feel free to let me know.

Course Schedule

Date	Meetings		Topics	Readings
9/3/25	Week 1		Introduction	
9/10/25	Week 2	Applications: Children	Pediatrics	Friman & Jones (2005) Moore et al. (2007) Wengreen et al. (2013) Hausman et al. (2017) Jones & Friman (1999)

9/17/25	Week 3		General Education	DiStasi et al. (2023) Emrby (2002) Carr et al. (2002)
9/24/25	Week 4		Foster Care	Daly & Thompson (2023) Luna et al. (2020) Storey et al. (2017)
10/1/25	Week 5	Applications: Adults	Substance Use	Hunt & Azrin (1973) Petry et al. (2005) Bickel et al. (2020)
10/8/25	Week 6		Gerontology <i>*SUBMIT TED ARTICLE</i>	Trahan et al. (2014) Bourgeois (1990) Baker et al. (2006)
10/15/25	Week 7		Health and fitness	Batchelder & Washington (2021) Schenk & Miltenberger (2019)
10/22/25	Week 8	Applications: Non-Human Animals	Domesticated Animals	Kranak & Kranak (2025) Dorey et al. (2012) Protopopova et al. (2016)
10/29/25	Week 9		Zoo Animals	Alligood et al. (2017) Fernandez & Martin (2023) Morris & Slocum (2019)
11/5/25	Week 10	Applications: Systems Change	Criminal Justice <i>*SUBMIT AREA TOPIC</i>	McDonald & Hanson (2024) Webb (2023) Joslyn & Morris (2024)
11/12/25	Week 11		Public Health	Normand et al. (2021) Fuqua (2025)
11/19/25	Week 12		Climate Change	Bonner & Biglan (2021) Hayes & Cone (1981) DeLeon & Fuqua (1995).
11/26/25	Week 13		TED Talk Presentations	
12/3/25	Week 14		TED Talk Presentations	
12/10/25	Week 15		TED Talk Presentations (if needed)	<i>*SUBMIT AREA PAPER</i>

NOTE: The dates assigned to each topic are approximate. Instructor reserves the right to modify aspects of the course (e.g., readings) during the semester to better serve the needs of the students.

References

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