

## PSYCHOLOGY 281 ASSIGNMENT 3

Due: 31 May 2012

LAST NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ FIRST NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ ID: \_\_\_\_\_

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### INSTRUCTIONS:

You may work on this assignment singly or in a group of two people. If you work in a group only turn in one assignment with the names and IDs of both students on it. Both members of a group receive the same grade.

Answer the questions in the space provide on this form. You may print off the form and fill in the answers by hand or open the form with a word processor and type your answers. If you write answers by hand your handwriting must be neat and legible. Whether you write answers by hand or type them, ensure that your answers actually make grammatical and syntactic sense. Failure to do so will be reflected in your grade... Also, be aware that **scientific writing should be succinct and to the point!** Rambling answers, sometimes called “shotgun answers”, in which lots of material is provided, much of it irrelevant to the actual question at hand, will be penalized during grading.

Once completed, staple (no paperclips or binders) the pages together and turn the assignment in to the instructor by the end of class on 31 May; a 10% penalty will be applied immediately to any assignment not submitted by this time. An additional 10% late penalty will be applied each subsequent day (including weekends and holidays) at 12:00 PM (i.e., noon). Late (or early!) assignments must be submitted *directly* to the instructor, or may be turned in to office staff at the Department of Psychology office (BSP-217), who will date-stamp the assignment (hours of operation Monday–Friday 8:00-12:00 and 1:00-4:00).

This assignment is out of 15 points

**Question 1:** Identify which basic operant contingency (e.g., positive reinforcement, negative punishment, etc.) is described in each example. (0.5 point each. Note: there may not necessarily be only one correct answer for some of these; however, you only need to provide one answer for each.)

A. You had a bad cavity and were in pain so you went to the dentist and had the tooth drilled and filled. The next time you have a cavity you will hurry off to the dentist to get it treated (note: always practice good oral hygiene!).

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B. John purchases the “gut-buster 2000” after watching an infomercial on late-night television. After it arrives he is disappointed to discover it is just a big rubber band and, even worse, he does

not develop the “abs of steel” as the advertisement promised. After getting the “gut-buster 2000” John stops watching infomercials forever.

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C. Brad has a bad cold and is in serious pain. In desperation he rubs a piece of crystal on his head. Overnight Brad’s immune system finally overwhelms the bacteria in his system and he wakes up the next day feeling better. However, Brad attributes his “miracle cure” to rubbing the crystal on his head and, the next time he’s sick, he reaches for his crystal.

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D. You put up your hand to ask a question in class and are praised by the teacher. Consequently, you raise your hand to ask more questions.

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E. A self-absorbed university student is suspected of cheating on an exam and is sent to the dean’s office.

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F. Sally steals her sister Mary’s boyfriend. In retaliation, Mary steals Sally’s cell phone. Sally comes to the conclusion that stealing your sister’s boyfriend away from her is a bad idea, and doesn’t do it again.

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G. A poor university student steals a textbook and is sent to a minimum security prison. His time in the "big house" convinces him to live a life of virtue and honesty. This is an example of

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H. You enter a school talent contest and are laughed off the stage by the audience. This public humiliation causes you to swear that you'll never do something like this again. Let’s assume you keep true to your word.

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I. Your upstairs neighbors are very noisy. Using a broom handle you pound on the ceiling and the noise stops. You are so impressed that the next time your neighbors are noisy you repeat this technique.

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J. Dr. Snyder's wife's cat (Beans) jumps up on top of Dr. Snyder's fish tank and eats one of the fish. Dr. Snyder squirts Beans with a water gun, but Beans keeps jumping up on to the top of the fish tank to try and snag a tasty fish-snack.

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**Question 2:** What does your knowledge of latent learning (discussed in class) tell us about trying to apply operant conditioning protocols to real-world situations? (1 point)

**Question 3:** We have discussed several alternatives to punishment that can be used to reduce a behaviour, including, for example, response prevention, extinction, and differential reinforcement (e.g., DRA, DRO, DRL). The following examples describe situations in which an alternative to punishment is used to reduce a behaviour. For each example, identify which alternative that best describes the technique utilized, and explain your choice. (1 point per question)

A. To reduce his amount of time spent playing video games in his room, Paul's parents buy him a bicycle and reinforce him for riding it by letting him stay out later than usual.

Alternative used:

Explanation:

B. Chivalrous Charlie constantly compliments his girlfriend Paula throughout the evening. He compliments her clothes, her hair, her topics of conversation, her menu choices, her decision to use the restroom, etc. After an hour of this an frustrated, but very much in love, Paula shifts to now only replying with gratitude to a select few of his compliments during the remainder of the evening.

Alternative used:

Explanation:

C. A zookeeper notices a pattern of self-injurious behaviour in one of his primates. He decides to provide social reinforcement if the animal does not engage in self-injurious behaviour for ten minutes.

Alternative used:

Explanation:

**Question 4:** Why are people more likely to develop aversions to foods they have not often eaten? (1 point)

**Question 5:** When studying operant conditioning in laboratory settings (e.g., with a rat pressing a lever or a pigeon pecking a key) psychologists typically use schedules of positive reinforcement, where the results are depicted with a cumulative record. It is unusual for positive punishment to be studied using the same experimental methodology. In the space below, explain why you think punishment is not studied in the same way. (1 point)

**Question 6:** Imagine that you are a "classroom trouble consultant" who uses behaviour modification techniques. You are hired to improve the behaviour of three disruptive students in a grade 3 classroom. The teacher would like the students to run around and shout less and read quietly more. You have several items/behaviours available for your use: internet time, small nutritious snacks, and art supplies. Explain how you would use Premack's Principle of

Reinforcement (as described in class and in chapter 5 of the textbook) to modify the children's behaviour. Be sure to indicate all of the steps/procedures you must go through in your effort to alter the students' behaviour. (4 points)