The International Behaviorology Institute Syllabus for BEHG 430 Resolving Problem Animal Behavior

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This syllabus provides course–specific information for a course that The International Behaviorology Institute (TIBI) offers. For guidance on enrolling, procuring required materials, and working through courses, as well as general school related information, see "General parameters and procedures for courses from The International Behaviorology Institute" available online at www.behaviorology.org or in the Spring 2015 issue (Volume 18, Number 2) of *Journal of Behaviorology.*

Course Title: BEHG 430 Resolving Problem Animal Behavior
Credits: 3 TIBI credits
Prerequisites: BEHG 330 Companion Animal Training
Course Format: Distance (online and offline options)
Time Frame: Commences upon enrollment. Self–paced within specified limits (estimated 150 hours; 3–15 weeks)
Professor: Assigned upon enrollment, with contact information

Required Resources

O'Heare, J. (2016). *Problem Animal Behavior: Functional Assessment and Constructional Contingency Management Planning.* Ottawa, Canada: BehaveTech Publishing. (ISBN 978-1-927744-06-2)

O'Heare, J. (2016). *Assignment Book for Problem Animal Behavior: Functional Assessment and Constructional Contingency Management Planning by James O'Heare.* Ottawa, Canada: BehaveTech Publishing. (ISBN 978-1-927744-07-9)

O'Heare, J. (2016). Minimally aversive contingency management planning. *Journal of Animal Behavior Technology, 6* (1), 19–35.

Rosales–Ruiz, J. (2016). Teaching dogs the clicker way. *Journal of Animal Behavior Technology, 6* (1), 7–12. (Or O'Heare, 2017, below.)

Friedman, S.G. (2016). Tsk, no, eh–eh: Clearing the path to reinforcement with an errorless mindset. *Journal of Animal Behavior Technology, 6* (1), 13–18. (Or O'Heare, 2017, below.)

O'Heare, J. (2017, forthcoming). Errorless training. *Journal of Animal Behavior Technology, 7* (2). (Consult your professor to determine whether to use the above two articles or this article.)

The articles above may be accessed through the Association of Animal Behavior Professionals web site under "Journal" at http://www.associationofanimalbehaviorprofessionals.com and the most recent version of the minimally aversive contingency management planning strategy may be found at http://www.associationofanimalbehaviorprofessionals.com/macmp.pdf

O'Heare, J. (2014). The emergence and expansion of behaviorology in the companion animal field. *Journal of Behaviorology, 17* (2), 3–6. This article may be accessed through the TIBI web site under "Journal" at www.behaviorology.org

Also required: Access, near the end of the course, to a companion animal, clicker, and treats.

Course Description

BEHG 430 Resolving Problem Animal Behavior applies behaviorology in the field of working with companion animals at an advanced level. BEHG 430 addresses (a) functional behavioral assessment of problematic behavior exhibited by companion animals including, but not limited to, dogs, cats, birds, and horses, and (b) the construction and implementation of non–coercive contingency management plans to resolve problematic behaviors. After reviewing basic principles of behavior, within the context of working with non–human animals, functional behavior assessment is covered in detail, including a functional diagnostic system. Forms are provided for student use. Next, the basic strategy for constructing a non–coercive contingency management plan based on the behavior replacement model is addressed, followed by coverage of behaviorological procedures applied to resolving problematic animal behavior. Teaching human clients to participate in intervention protocols is also covered. The material in this course is applicable to resolving problematic behavior of any non– or minimally language–exhibiting species (including wild animals and humans who exhibit few or no language skills). In the last two weeks of the course, the student will require access to a companion animal (and basic training supplies) for the final, hands–on, assignment.

Broadly, BEHG 430 covers the following topic areas:

❧ Definition and history of behaviorology, including an examination of radical behaviorism and natural science, as opposed to pseudoscience, and the different perspectives on behavior, including behaviorology, psychology, behavior analysis, ethology, and the medical model approach;

❧ Principles of behavior in the context of working with non–human animals;

❧ The problems associated with aversive conditioning practices and the use of constructional, graded, and errorless—rather than eliminative—approaches, including a strategy and set of guidelines for avoiding the use of aversive stimulation;

❧ Functional behavior assessment of problematic animal behaviors; and

❧ Strategies, tactics, and procedures in constructing and implementing comprehensive contingency management plans derived from functional assessment data.

Course Objectives

The primary objective of this course is to expand the student's repertoire of behavior measurably in relevant areas of behaviorological course content. The student will:

❧ Differentiate between natural sciences and pseudoscience, and between behaviorology, psychology, ethology, and the medical model approach to behavior;

❧ Define and relate elementary terms such as behavior, antecedent and postcedent stimulation, conditioning, response, response class, response class form, functional relation, contingency, added and subtracted and conditioned and unconditioned reinforcement and punishment, plus extinction, and provide unique examples of each;

❧ Define, contrast, and compare operant and respondent conditioning processes, including the procedures used to achieve each, and provide unique examples;

❧ Define the basic and compound schedules of reinforcement, including the different kinds of differential reinforcement and differential reinforcement–like procedures;

❧ Define and relate methods of transferring stimulus control via prompt fading and prompt delay procedures, and discuss generating behavior via prompts;

❧ Define function–altering stimulation, including motivating operations;

❧ Explain the importance of quantifying behavior, define and relate measures of behavior, including count, rate, relative frequency, duration, and magnitude, and describe measurement systems, as well as graphing methods;

❧ Define aversive stimulation and describe the problematic side effects it can generate, and describe strategies for avoiding the use of aversive training methods;

❧ Describe the functional assessment process, including the functional interview, direct observation, and functional analysis phases, and formulate a functional diagnosis of problematic behaviors;

❧ Describe how to establish formal behavior objectives and quantify behavior throughout the intervention, including the selections of measures of behavior and measurement systems;

❧ Describe how to construct a comprehensive contingency management plan that is constructional and minimally aversive, and based on sound behaviorological strategies, and derived from functional assessment data, including both antecedent and postcedent control procedures;

❧ Describe, contrast, and compare various differential reinforcement and differential reinforcement–like procedures, and identify how to select a procedure and apply it to specific cases; and

❧ Explain the role of emotional behavior in problematic contingencies, describe how to externalize the contingency analysis, and discuss how to design operant–based procedures that allow for potential by–product respondent counterconditioning.

Course Assignment

This assignment will provide the student with the opportunity to apply contingency management planning principles, strategies, and procedures to an actual behavior case, and then implement that plan in a safe manner. This assignment will likely take several hours in terms of planning, execution, and reporting, including several sessions working with the companion animal. It is advisable to plan for needing two weeks to complete the assignment and several days of access, during that interval, with the companion animal. The student will also require a "clicker"—a vocal conditioned reinforcer may be used, but is not recommended—and small quickly consumable treats.

Please note that no animal, be it human or otherwise, is to be caused harm or discomfort for this assignment, which is why the student is to utilize non–coercive methods throughout its completion. Furthermore, the "problem" behavior that the student will resolve is trained specifically for this purpose and is to be harmless. This assignment is not to be used to resolve an actual problematic behavior. If, for any unanticipated reason, this training task cannot be executed in safety, please

do not perform it and contact your professor so that he or she may advise on working around or otherwise mitigating the risk.

This assignment is broken down into three phases for convenience. Each of the three phases is explained below:

Phase 1. Start by training your companion animal to exhibit a harmless "problem" behavior. You may choose from the following options: (a) nose/beak touching a specific object; (b) waving a paw/foot; or (c) spinning in a circle. The problem behavior is to be maintained by added reinforcement (not subtracted reinforcement). Transfer stimulus control of the "problem" behavior to a common activity such as your entering the room, or opening or closing a door (and not to a vocal cue or hand motion). Once the subject exhibits the behavior six times in a row with a relative frequency of 100%, you may proceed to phase 2.

Phase 2. You now have a "problem" behavior. Because the target behavior and its rate are known, and the evocative and consequating stimuli are also known, no functional analysis will be required, but you do need to prepare a contingency analysis diagram of the "problem." Decide on a measure for the behavior and a measurement system to track the behavior throughout the intervention. Construct and implement a contingency management plan to resolve this "problem," bringing it to a relative frequency of 0% through ten trials. You must utilize an added reinforcement–emphasized plan emphasizing a constructional, graded, and errorless approach. Use the course materials to guide your choice of general strategy and procedures. Prepare a full contingency management plan including the formal behavior objective and description of how the procedures will be applied to the specific case in question. Then, implement the contingency management plan. It is recommended that you video record all sessions, either for your own edification or to help you evaluate your own performance. Also, your professor may require you to submit a video record of your work in this project. If so, she or he will provide you with guidelines.

Phase 3 (Reports). (a) As one report, present the contingency analysis diagram and the contingency management plan that you constructed and, as another report, (b) submit an essay describing how each component of the plan went and how you worked around any difficulties. These two reports are to be separate documents. Identify any areas you could have handled better in the design of the plan and/or in its implementation, including what you could do to make the intervention more efficient and effective. The essay report (i.e., not including the contingency analysis and contingency management plan document) should be no shorter than four pages and no longer than eight pages (with one–inch margins, double spaced). This assignment will not be graded based on literal success with respect to meeting the formal behavior objective but rather on the appropriateness, accuracy, and completeness of the contingency management plan, and on the insightfulness of your explanation and analysis of your performance.

Assignment Sequence & Time Management

The following checklist provides students with the sequence in which the assignments are to be completed with pacing to fit into the 15–week semester time frame. Progressing more slowly than this schedule, assignments could easily get backed up to the point where insufficient time remains to complete them in a satisfactory manner. Students may use this sample schedule to help ensure that they remain on track. We estimate that each weekly assignment load will take approximately 9–10 hours to work through, assuming it takes 150 hours to work through all of the material. Students should expect and plan to put in at least 10 hours per week and use that to gauge whether they will need more or less time in the weeks to come. Students may check the box next to each assignment as they complete and submit it.

Check	Week	Resource	Component
❑	1	*Problem Animal Behavior* and related Study Questions (SQs) and *The Emergence and Expansion of Behaviorology in the Companion Animal Field* paper	*Chapters 1–2* *All*
❑	2	*Problem Animal Behavior* and related SQs	*Chapter 3*
❑	3	*Problem Animal Behavior* and related SQs	*Chapter 4*
❑	4	*Problem Animal Behavior* and related SQs	*Chapter 5*
❑	5	*Problem Animal Behavior* and related SQs	*Chapter 6*
❑	6	*Problem Animal Behavior* and related SQs	*Chapter 7*

❑	7	*Problem Animal Behavior* and related SQs	*Chapter 8*
❑	8	*Problem Animal Behavior* and related SQs	*Chapter 9*
❑	9	*Problem Animal Behavior* and related SQs	*Chapter 10*
❑	10	*Problem Animal Behavior* and related SQs	*Chapter 11*
❑	11	*Problem Animal Behavior* and related SQs	*Chapter 12*
❑	12	*Problem Animal Behavior* and related SQs	*Chapter 13*
❑	13	*Friedman article & Rosales–Ruiz article OR O'Heare (2017) article (Consult your professor…)*	
❑	14	Course *Assignment*	*Phases 1 & 2*
❑	15	*Course Assignment*	*Phases 2 & 3*

Please contact TIBI at www.behaviorology.org with any questions about the content of this syllabus or the *General Parameters & Procedures for Courses from The International Behaviorology Institute*.