

***TIBI Online Syllabus for  
BEHG 410:  
Behaviorological  
Thanatology and  
Dignified Dying***

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[This is another installment in the series of syllabi for TIBI's online courses. Each syllabus appears in *Behaviorology Today* basically in the same form as it appears online. The series continues whenever there are syllabi that have yet to be printed, or that require reprinting due to substantial revisions. Locate additional syllabi through the *Syllabus Directory* at the back of the most recent issue.—Ed.]

*Note #1:* This syllabus contains some notes that supplement the more traditional syllabus parts. Each note is numbered for convenient reference. Some notes, like this one, have multiple paragraphs.

*This syllabus is a long document.* It is longer than a syllabus for a face-to-face course as it contains material that the professor would otherwise cover in person. *Hence it was designed to be printed out for reading!* Furthermore, it was designed to be used *as a task check-off list*. Please print it out and use it these ways.

The only activity in this course for which you might need access to a computer is to print this syllabus as a reference for how this course works so you can follow the directions to complete this course. This is a matter of access, student access to education, so that everyone who wants this course can take it regardless of whether they own several computers or only have access to one in their local library or in a friend's home.

Students can, if they wish, study the topics of this course free of charge, perhaps to fulfill their own inter-

ests. They would do so simply by completing the activities described in this syllabus.

Students can also study the topics of this course for TIBI (The International Behaviorology Institute) credit, perhaps toward a TIBI certificate. They would do so by paying the necessary fee to be assigned a professor to provide feedback on, and assessment of, their efforts. (This course can be part of several TIBI certificates. Contact TIBI or visit [www.behaviorology.org](http://www.behaviorology.org) for details.)

Also, students can study the topics of this course for regular academic credit; they would do so by contacting any accredited institution of higher education that offers behaviorology courses accepted by TIBI, such as the State University of New York at Canton (SUNY-Canton) at [www.canton.edu](http://www.canton.edu) which is SUNY-Canton's web site. At SUNY-Canton this course may be offered as *SSCI 415: Dignified Dying*. TIBI automatically accepts A or B grades from the academic-credit version of this course as equivalent to its own course toward its certificates (and C and D academic-credit grades can be remediated through TIBI for TIBI credit; contact TIBI for details). Alternatively, the work done completing this course through TIBI may make taking the course for academic credit easier; ask the professor who teaches SUNY-Canton's equivalent course about this.

The parts of this syllabus cover many topics. While the headings may be different, these include (a) the course content and objectives, (b) the text, study, and assessment materials, (c) the grading policy, (d) the necessary work-submission methods and professor feedback, and (e) the study-activity sequence and completion timelines.

*Note #2:* The prerequisite (or corequisite) for this course is BEHG 101: Introduction to Behaviorology I. If you have not had this prerequisite course (or its academic-credit equivalent such as SSCI 245: Introduction to the Science and Technology of Behavior, from SUNY-Canton), then you need to take it before taking this course for TIBI credit.

### Course Description

BEHG 415: *Behaviorological Thanatology and Dignified Dying*. This course examines the application of the natural science and technology of behavior to the question of how we can improve end-of-life interactions between the dying and society, between the terminally ill and their survivors, between ourselves and our loved ones at those difficult times. The course first covers the scientific understanding of coercion and punishment as these inform many past and current social practices in such situations. The course then considers a range of scientifically grounded alternative, proactive practices capable of increasing and maintaining the human dignity of all parties in these circumstances. The historical context, and social contingencies affecting new practices, are included in the consideration of how to move from old to new practices.

*Note #3:* To check out other behaviorology courses offered by TIBI, visit their locations on the TIBI web site ([www.behaviorology.org](http://www.behaviorology.org)). To check out other behaviorology courses offered by SUNY-Canton, see the list and descriptions—and in some cases, the syllabi for the asynchronous versions—on the faculty web page of the professor who teaches them (which currently is Dr. Stephen F. Ledoux; click Ledoux in the faculty directory at [www.canton.edu](http://www.canton.edu)).

### Course Objectives

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

- ❧ Analyze punishment and coercion scientifically as a problematic basis of many past and current practices in end-of-life situations;
- ❧ Evaluate the implications of that analysis for successful behavior engineering of more proactive practices for those situations;
- ❧ Describe the scientifically uninformed patterns in which the dying are currently treated by both themselves and others, and the historical context from which these patterns derive;
- ❧ Apply behavior engineering design principles to the scientific development of new, more proactive patterns that increase and maintain the dignity of the dying;
- ❧ Summarize the effects of cultural contingencies on society's acceptance of scientifically sound practices promoting dignified dying.

### Additional Objectives

- ❧ Successful, A earning students will use (at an accuracy level of 90% or better) relevant disciplinary terminology when discussing (a) the scientifically uninformed patterns in which the dying are treated by both themselves and others, and (b) the behaviorological design of new, more proactive patterns that increase and maintain the dignity of the dying.
- ❧ Such successful students will also ask questions, seek answers, converse about, and act on the uses and benefits of this discipline for humanity.
- ❧ Such successful students will also behave more effectively in other ways with respect to themselves and others.

### Required Materials (in their order of use)

- ❧ Sidman, M. (2001). *Coercion and its Fallout*. Boston, MA: Authors Cooperative.
- ❧ Kopp, J. (2001). *Coercion and its Fallout Study Guide*. Boston, MA: Authors Cooperative.
- ❧ Fraley, L.E. (in progress). *Behaviorological Thanatology*.
- ❧ Ledoux, S.F. (in progress). *Study Questions for Fraley's Behaviorological Thanatology*. Canton, NY: ABCs.

The first two of these required books carry over as part of other behavior engineering topic courses of possible interest to you (e.g., *Preventing School Violence*, and *Preventing Workplace Violence*).

### Recommended Materials

These are references to materials that, while *not* required for the course, may also be of interest to those who wish to go deeper into the course topics and extensions:

✦ Cautela, J.R. (1994). General level of reinforcement II: Further elaborations. *Behaviorology*, 2 (1), 1-16.

✦ Cheney, C.D. (1991). The source and control of behavior. In W. Ishaq (Ed.). *Human Behavior in Today's World* (pp. 73-86). New York: Praeger.

✦ Fraley, L.E. (1987). The cultural mission of behaviorology. *The Behavior Analyst*, 10 (1), 123-126.

✦ Fraley, L.E. (1998). A behaviorological thanatology: Foundations and implications. *The Behavior Analyst*, 21 (1), 13-26.

✦ Fraley, L.E. (1998). Beyond equality: A reply to Rakos. *The Behavior Analyst*, 21 (1), 33-35.

✦ Fraley, L.E. (1998). New ethics and practices for death and dying from an analysis of the sociocultural metacontingencies. *Behavior and Social Issues*, 8 (1), 9-31.

✦ Fraley, L.E. (1998). Pursuing and interpreting the implications of a natural philosophy and science with the values associated with other epistemologies. *Behavior and Social Issues*, 8 (1), 33-39.

✦ Fraley, L.E. (manuscript). The ethics of medical practices during protracted dying: A natural science perspective.

✦ Fraley, L.E. (manuscript). Behaviorological principles for the analysis of bereavement.

✦ Krapfl, J.E. & Vargas, E.A. (Eds.). (1977). *Behaviorism and Ethics*. Kalamazoo, MI: Behaviordelia.

✦ Rakos, R.F. (1998). Dying slowly with compassion and dignity: A commentary. *The Behavior Analyst*, 21 (1), 27-32.

*Note #4:* You can order the required *books* through the publishers, including *ABCs* at 315-386-2684. You may also order these materials through the online bookstore at [www.behavior.org](http://www.behavior.org) which is the web site of the Cambridge Center for Behavioral Studies.

Also, this course is grounded in the Shaping Model of Education which is informed by behaviorological science (rather than the Presentation Model of Education which is informed by psychology). In the shaping model teaching is not seen as mostly talking (nor is learning seen as mostly listening). Instead, teaching is the scientifically grounded design, arrangement, and application of educational materials, methods, and contingencies in ways that generate and maintain small but continuously accumulating behaviors the short and long range consequences of which are successful in producing an ever wider range of effective responding (i.e., learning) on the part of the student.

### Grades

Grading policy does not involve curves, for you are not in competition with anyone (except perhaps yourself). That is, all students are expected to produce the academic products demonstrating that they have, individually, achieved at least mastery of the subject matter, if not fluency. Therefore, all students are expected to earn an A or a B (although inadequate products will produce a lower result that requires remediation before it can become a passing grade). Also, all students will receive the grades they earn. This holds even if the expectation for which the course is designed—that all students earn *As*—is met: If all earn *As*, then all receive *As*.

Passing grades are limited to A and B, and are earned according to the amount of assigned work that is successfully completed:

Earning an A consists mainly of satisfactorily completing 90% or more of the work on all assignments.

Earning a B consists mainly of satisfactorily completing more than 80% of the work on all assignments (but not more than 90% on them).

For convenience a point-accumulation system is invoked to keep track of progress through the course. The assignments on the *Coercion and Its Fallout* book are worth 100 points (5 points for each of the 20 short assignments). And the assignments on the *Behaviorological Thanatology* book are worth 200 points (25 points for each of the eight assignments). This provides a grand total of 300 possible points. The grade that you receive is partly based on the percentage of these possible points that you actually earn.

However, point accumulation is not the grade determiner but is merely used as a convenient way to track progress *on the presumption that all course tasks are in progress*. This is because doing work on *all* of the tasks for the course is the more relevant determiner of grades than is the accumulation of points. (For example, a student who tries to accumulate just enough points, on some easier tasks, to get a B—while ignoring other course tasks—would not that way actually meet the criteria for a B and so would have to continue and complete all the required work satisfactorily to earn one of the passing grades.)

Also, students should expect to be asked occasionally to complete various test-like assessments. The level of success on these assessments helps gauge the extent to which the work on the course assignments is actually producing the learning implied by the completion of that work.

These practices are in place because the scientific research—data based Shaping Model of Education recognizes the student/professor relationship as a professional relationship in which coercive practices (i.e., aversive educational practices) are seen as inappropriate (so long as extreme conditions do not exist making such practices

unavoidable). Instead, the more effective, efficient, and productive non-coercive practices of carefully designed and sequenced assignments emphasizing added reinforcement for timely work well done is generally seen as more appropriate. So, your effort and cooperation are expected and presumed; please do not disappoint either your professor or yourself.

### ***About Using the Texts & Study Question Books***

Unless specified otherwise, you need to write out your answers in longhand. The reason you are to write out your answers by hand is that this type of verbal response brings about more learning than merely saying—or even typing—the answer. This is because—as taught in another advanced behaviorology class (i.e., BEHG 355: Verbal Behavior I)—writing the answer in longhand involves both point-to-point correspondence and formal similarity between the stimuli and the response products of the answer.

### ***The Coercion Book***

The *Coercion* book introduces students to the problems resulting from coercion and punishment. These form the scientifically discovered basis of most of the violence throughout society, including the disrespectful, dignity-robbing practices common to interactions with those who are dying. The book also introduces students to the general scientific approach to improving those practices. *Coercion* book assignments are provided in the *Assignment Sequence* section.

### ***The Behaviorological Thanatology Book***

The *Behaviorological Thanatology* book provides students with a comprehensive application of the natural science principles of behavior to the field of thanatology and to the development of new cultural practices that improve the respect with which society treats the terminally ill and that maintain the dignity of those who are dying. *Behaviorological Thanatology* book assignments are provided in the *Assignment Sequence* section.

### ***The Study Question Books***

Each textbook (*Coercion*, and *Behaviorological Thanatology*) has a book of study questions. These were prepared to help you expand your behavior repertoire based on the material in each textbook. You are to complete each textbook's study questions in the sequence assigned because learning occurs when reinforced responses are made (like writing question answers), especially responses that automatically provide their own reinforcing consequences (like being right) as does writing out study question answers correctly. You complete the assigned study questions, *after reading the chapter through*, by *writing out* the answer to each question when you come to each question as you *reread* the chapter. You *write out* the answers

right in the *Study Question* book. Write out your answers in full sentences that incorporate the questions. Check all your answers. And make any corrections that you find you need to make as you review and learn the material.

Most study question books start with a section titled To the Student and Teacher. *Read this section first!* It explains more on how to do the study questions successfully. (You will also find it helpful to mark the number of each study question in the margins of the text at the location of the study question's answer.) Study question book assignments are provided in the *Assignment Sequence* section. Submit your work according to the method specified in the *Submitting Your Work* section.

*Note #5:* Since you are to write out your answers to the study questions directly in the study question books, you need to have your own study question books. To assure that this is followed by everyone equally, you need to fill out and send in to your professor (by regular postal mail) the original ownership forms in the rear of your ABCs-published study question books.

### ***Submitting Your Work***

These work-submission methods only apply if you are taking the course for TIBI credit. (Any addresses and phone/fax numbers that you may need will be clarified upon enrollment.)

To submit your study question answers, which must be hand-written, you can scan and fax to your professor the pages that have your answers for each assignment. However, your professor would prefer that you photocopy those pages and send them to your professor by regular postal mail.

In all cases, you are to keep the original of your work. This insures against loss and enables you and your professor to communicate about your work (as you will then both have an identical copy). Note, however, that for study question answers, email and email attachments are neither reliable enough, nor identical enough, for this purpose, so they are not to be used for this purpose.

Your work will be perused and points will be allocated according to the quality of your work. Should any inadequacies be apparent, you will be informed so that you can make improvements. While sometimes your professor will provide a metaphorical pat on the back for a job well done, if you do not hear of any inadequacies, then pat yourself on the back for a job well done even as you continue on to the next assignment.

### ***Assignment Sequence***

Students should work their way through the course by reading and studying the texts and materials, and sending in their work for each assignment. The slowest reasonable self-pacing of the coursework (presuming a

typical 15-week semester) is this sequence which can be used as a check-off list:

- Week 1: The *Coercion* book: Introduction & Chs. 1 & 2.
- Week 2: The *Coercion* book: Chs. 3, 4, & 5.
- Week 3: The *Coercion* book: Chs. 6, 7, & 8.
- Week 4: The *Coercion* book: Chs. 9, 10, & 11.
- Week 5: The *Coercion* book: Chs. 12, 13, & 14.
- Week 6: The *Coercion* book: Chs. 15, 16, & 17.
- Week 7: The *Coercion* book: Chs. 18 & 19.
- Week 8: The *Behaviorological Thanatology* book: Preface & Ch. 1.
- Week 9: The *Behaviorological Thanatology* book: Ch. 2.
- Week 10: The *Behaviorological Thanatology* book: Ch. 3.
- Week 11: The *Behaviorological Thanatology* book: Ch. 4.
- Week 12: The *Behaviorological Thanatology* book: Ch. 5.
- Week 13: The *Behaviorological Thanatology* book: Ch. 6.
- Week 14: The *Behaviorological Thanatology* book: Ch. 7.
- Week 15: The *Behaviorological Thanatology* book: Ch. 8.

Do the assignments in this sequence, even if you do them at a faster pace than the pace presented here. If you go slower than this schedule, assignments could easily back up on you to the point where insufficient time remains to complete them in a satisfactory manner.

*Note #6: Be sure that everything you submit is readable and contains your name!*

*Note #7: The usual higher education workload expectation for a course is about 150 hours. (The typical face-to-face course features about 50 in-class contact hours with the university expecting about 100 more hours of additional study at the average rate of about two hours out of class for each hour in class.) This can be accomplished at rates ranging from about 50 hours per week over three*

weeks to about ten hours per week over the typical 15 weeks of a semester. Of course, some students may take a little less than 150 hours, while others may take more than 150 hours, to do the work to the same acceptable and expected standard.

You can—and are encouraged to—go through the assignments as rapidly as your schedule allows. This could mean spending a typical 15 weeks on the course. Or it could mean doing the whole course in as little as—but not in less than—three weeks, as one would progress through the *single* allowed course in a three-week summer school term. That is, you could work on the course anywhere from minimum part-time (i.e., at the rate of about ten hours per week, as described in the *Assignment Sequence* section) to maximum full-time (i.e., at the rate of about 50 hours per week).

If you are to be successful, you need to exercise some self-management skills by starting immediately and keeping up a reasonable and steady pace on the course work. You need to do this because your professor will *not* be reminding you that the products of your work are due; all the coursework is set forth in this syllabus and so is automatically assigned. You are expected to follow through on your own. You need to set an appropriate pace for yourself (or accept the pace in the *Assignment Sequence* section) and adhere to that pace, and thereby get the sequence of assignments done and submitted to your professor. This will assist your success.

At various points in the course, you will be provided with feedback about your work. Upon completing all the coursework, you will be provided with your earned grade. (The grade is provided solely for the person whose work earned the grade.) We at TIBI are sure that the outcomes of your efforts to study this aspect of behaviorological science will benefit both you and others, and we encourage you to study further aspects. ☺