



Psychology of Food and Decision-Making

Course Syllabus

Course Description

This course utilizes behavioral principles of psychology to explain food decision-making, exploring both internal and external phenomena which may affect eating behaviors. First, this class will define the construct of health and identify foods which constitute a healthy diet. Second, this class will introduce behavioral principles of operant and classical conditioning to explain food decision-making in everyday environments. Lastly, this course will explore the role of diet culture in western societies, identifying negative health outcomes that may stem from dieting and introducing evidence-based alternatives to facilitate healthy decision-making.

This course enhances classroom teaching effectiveness and supports improved student outcomes by introducing new knowledge in how behavioral psychology influences food decision-making, recognizing the impact of diet culture and disordered eating, and applying evidence-based strategies to promote healthy and sustainable eating behaviors.

Please note: This course has information about eating disorders and some resources include age-restricted videos on YouTube.

Course Objectives

At the end of this course you should be able to:

1. Define the construct of “health” and identify foods which constitute a healthy diet.
2. Describe the physiology of eating and why we tend to favor highly palatable foods.
3. Identify principles of operant conditioning and describe its influence on food decision-making behaviors.
4. Describe the process of classical conditioning and its application to food cues.
5. Describe the three forms of food cue reactivity and their effect on food consumption.
6. Describe how the physical environment contributes to diet culture and identify negative health outcomes associated with dieting.
7. Identify disordered eating patterns and describe the role of diet culture in disordered eating.
8. Describe evidence-based methods of facilitating healthy eating behaviors.

Modules

- Module 1: What is Health?, Quiz 1
- Module 2: The Physiology of Eating, Quiz 2
- Module 3: Operant Conditioning and Eating Behaviors, Quiz 3
- Module 4: Classical Conditioning and Eating Behaviors, Quiz 4



- Module 5: Food Cue Reactivity, Quiz 5
- Module 6: Diet Culture, Quiz 6
- Module 7: Disordered Eating, Quiz 7
- Module 8: Facilitating Healthy Eating Behaviors, Quiz 8

Grading:

Each quiz must be passed at an 80% or higher (three attempts allowed).

Format

This is a self-paced, asynchronous (no required live meetings) course. Throughout the PD course, you will find it helpful to take notes along the way to assist with the quizzes. Within each module, you will find reflection assessments that are not graded but will help in your journey through the course. There is an interactive forum in the course to help you connect with peers and instructors, share ideas, and collaborate on best practices throughout your learning journey.