Unit 5: Learning Theory
Our next unit is “Learning Theory.” Learning is defined by your text as “is a relatively permanent change in your behavior due to experience.” Another way of putting that learning is the process of adapting behaviors based on past experience. There are two types. ASSOCIATIVE LEARNING happens when we form links, or associations, between different stimuli in our environment and our response to them. Many animals, including humans, learn this way. COGNITIVE LEARNING, on the other hand, is more common in humans than other animals. It is the higher-level learning that involves thinking, knowing, understanding, and anticipation. Having said that, some animals do engage in simpler forms of cognitive learning.

Unit Objectives
The following is a description of learning objectives for the major content areas covered in the AP Psychology Exam during this unit, as well as the approximate percentages of the multiple-choice section devoted to each area. This listing is not intended to be an exhaustive list of topics. All of these topics are likely to appear on the AP exam in some way, shape, or form. Other material we talk about and/or in your reading could also find its way on the unit assessment.

Learning (7-9% of AP exam)
This section of the course introduced students to differences between learned and unlearned behavior. The primary focus is exploration of different kinds of learning, including classical conditioning, operant conditioning, and observational learning. The biological bases of behavior illustrate predispositions for learning.

AP students in psychology should be able to do the following:

- Distinguish general differences between principles of classical conditioning, operant conditioning, and observational learning (e.g., contingencies)
- Describe basic classical conditioning phenomena, such as acquisition, extinction, spontaneous recovery, generalization, discrimination, and higher-order learning.
- Predict the effects of operant conditioning (e.g., positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, punishment, schedules of reinforcement)
- Predict how practice, schedules of reinforcement, and motivation will influence quality of learning
- Interpret graphs that exhibit the results of learning experiments
- Provide examples of how biological constraints create learning predispositions
- Describe the essential characteristics of insight learning, latent learning, and social learning
- Apply learning principles to explain emotional learning, taste aversion, superstitious behavior, and learned helplessness
- Suggest how behavior modification, biofeedback, coping strategies, and self-control can be used to address behavioral problems
- Identify key contributors in the psychology of learning (e.g., Albert Bandura, John Garcia, Ivan Pavlov, Robert Rescorla, B. F. Skinner, Edward Thorndike, Edward Tolman, John B. Watson).

Text Readings
- Coon Chapter 7
- Barron’s Chapter 6
Key Terms
By the end of the unit you should be able to properly and accurately use the terms at the beginning of Chapter 6 of Barron’s, as well as the terms in bold interspersed throughout Chapter 7 of Coon, in written and verbal communication.

Planned Assignments & Assessments (subject to change)
We have to get through this unit very quickly. Therefore, you will not have any quizzes. Instead I am attaching them to this unit summary and you can fill them out on your own. However, I do expect the following reading to be completed by the date indicated so you have the appropriate background knowledge for our class conversations.

- Coon p.218-225; Corresponding pages in Barron’s (Period 1 & 3 by Tu 12/1; Period 7 by M 12/1)
- Coon p.226-241; Corresponding pages in Barron’s (Period 1 by W 12/3; Period 3 by F 12/5; Period 7 by W 12/3)
- Coon p.241-248; Corresponding pages in Barron’s Barron’s (Period 1 &3 by M 12/8; Period 7 by F 12/5)
- Learning Theory Unit Test
- Learning Theory Independent Investigation

Current Timetable (subject to change)
- Last day of unit planned for Tuesday December 9