

The University of Findlay

College of Sciences

Summer 2026

The mission of The University of Findlay is to equip our students for meaningful lives and productive careers.

Course Number: ASLA 439 Animal Positive Reinforcement Training: Online Elephant

Credit Hours: 1 credit hour

Class Time/Place: Online

Prerequisites, Co-requisites and Course Description:

This course will cover how animal training is essential for improving captive animal welfare in zoos and rescues. In this course, students will learn from an experienced positive reinforcement animal trainer about the fundamentals of positive reinforcement target training. Students will learn many principles from how to train a new healthcare behavior to how to prevent and reduce aggressive and stereotypic behaviors. This course is beneficial for students wishing to pursue a career in veterinary medicine, animal behavior, animal training, or zoology. The course is repeatable with a maximum of 9 total credits provided the topics are unique.

Instructor: Erica Ward, DVM; Christine Pratt

Instructor Contact Information: Erica@loopabroad.com; pr.elephant.training@gmail.com

Office Hours: upon request

Course Objectives:

The following Learning Objectives will be addressed or assessed as part of the course:

- **Understand** the benefits of positive reinforcement training
- **Understand** the principles of operant conditioning and classical conditioning theory
- **Apply** the ABC's of animal training determining the antecedent, behavior and consequence
- **Analyze** behavioral scenarios to identify conditioned responses
- **Create** a behavior pyramid to train a new behavior using successive approximations
- **Understand** the practical application of how to change an animal's perception of a stimulus using different techniques such as active desensitization, passive desensitization and counterconditioning
- **Apply** training techniques such as DRO and DRI to troubleshoot problem behavior.
- **Understand** how to set an animal up for success in positive reinforcement training
- **Understand** the techniques for addressing aggression and stereotypical behavior

Required Textbooks and Other Materials: All required texts will be provided in the online modules.

Instructional Strategies:

Case Analysis	x	Library and Internet Research	
Debate		Practice/drill	
Discovery/Independent Research		Problem-solving	x
Discussion/Questioning/Interviewing		Reading assignments	
Experiential Learning		Role-playing/simulation games	
Field Experience		Service Learning	
Group Presentation		Video/Audio Review and Critique	
Laboratory Experiences		Other	
Lecture	x		

Methods of Assessment: Your course grade will be determined as follows:

Abstracts		Participation	
Attendance		Peer Evaluation	
Capstone Project		Portfolio	
Case Study		Portfolio Lab Performance	
Exams	x	Presentations	
Group Projects		Professional Evaluation	
Homework Assignments	x	Quizzes	x
Internet Research		Research project	
Journaling		Other	
Lab Performance			
Oral/written review of literature			

Grading: Your course grade will be determined as follows:

This course is composed of multiple lessons in the form of modules. At the end of each lesson

there will be a multiple choice quiz. There is also a final exam and final project due at the end of the course.

Exams: 40%

Quizzes: 40%

Final Project: 20%

Grading Scale/Distribution:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>Grading Scale</u>
A	4.00	93-100
A-	3.67	90-92
B+	3.33	87-89
B	3.00	83-86
B-	2.67	80-82
C+	2.33	77-79
C	2.00	73-76
C-	1.67	70-72
D+	1.33	67-69
D	1.00	63-66
D-	0.67	62-60
F	0.00	below 60
U	0.00	

University Honor Code:

Each and every student of the University will adhere to the following Honor Code:

“I will not knowingly engage in any dishonorable behavior, cheat, steal, lie, or commit any act of plagiarism during any academic work, course, or endeavor. If I observe an act which I believe violates the University’s Honor Code, I may, at my discretion, report it to the appropriate personnel.”

Student Acknowledgement of University Honor Code:

“I acknowledge that I have fully complied or will comply with all aspects of the University’s Honor Code in submitting this work.”

Student Rights and Responsibilities Statement, Article VIII-Academic Integrity:

<http://catalog.findlay.edu/en/current/Undergraduate-Catalog/Student-Rights-and-Responsibilities-Statement/VIII-Academic-Integrity>

University Diversity Statement:

As part of our commitment to achieve excellence, the University of Findlay values and actively promotes a welcoming and supportive environment that honors the many aspects of diversity. We aspire to foster acceptance of, respect for, and appreciation of all persons in our campus community. We celebrate our commonalities and unique differences, and we acknowledge that diversity broadens learning, stimulates creativity, promotes the exchange of ideas, and prepares our students for meaningful lives and productive careers.

Course Policies and Practices:

Attendance and Participation Policy

Students are expected to attend all class meetings for which they are registered. This is regarded as a matter of individual student responsibility. The only excused reasons for absences will be illness that impairs the ability to attend and function within the classroom setting or an unavoidable personal emergency.

Students are expected to attend all class sessions on all days of class. It will be the responsibility of the student to contact the course instructor or site director, preferably before the absence, to provide the appropriate documentation and verification for the reason for the absence, and to make arrangements with the course instructor for missed work. Students are responsible for all missed class material. Students may be subject to limited participation in hands-on practice at the instructor's discretion if they have missed the underlying material needed to safely perform the task at hand.

Final Exam Date: TBD

Special Services: If you are a student with a disability, it is your responsibility to inform your instructor and register with the Office of Disability Services (ods@findlay.edu) at least one week prior to a needed service so reasonable accommodations can be made.

Course and Instructor Evaluation: Each student is expected to complete the course and instructor evaluation which is sent electronically to the student by the Office of the Registrar. The electronic notification comes in the form of an e-mail from the UF Registrar's Office with the following subject line: Online survey for the designated course (e.g., BIOL 102).

Last Date of Attendance Policy: Instructors are required to indicate the last known date of attendance when a final grade of "F" or "U" is assigned to a student.

Course Modules:

1. Operant Conditioning and Classical Conditioning Theory
2. Positive Reinforcement Training with Elephants

3. Foundational Measures of PR+ Training
4. Planning a Behavior
5. Desensitization and Counterconditioning
6. Let's Train a Behavior! Part 1
7. Let's Train a Behavior! Part 2
8. Let's Train a Behavior! Part 3
9. Troubleshooting Problem Behavior Part 1
10. Troubleshooting Problem Behavior Part 2
11. Addressing Aggression
12. Addressing Stereotypical Behavior