Paper applying Learning Concepts to your Life

This assignment is required of each person in class. It is equal in weight to one test (300 points), but unlike a test score, it cannot be dropped. The paper is due by the end of class on Friday, May 17. Papers coming in after class on Friday, May 17 will be docked 10% (30 points) per day, including weekend days. You will earn 10 extra credit points, however, if your paper is received by the end of class on Friday, May 10.

The point of this assignment is to apply your knowledge of one of 2 different types of learning (Classical Conditioning OR Operant Conditioning) to a situation you have personally experienced.

Part I of the assignment requires you to describe, in your own words, the type of learning that you will be applying to your life (classical or operant conditioning). Pick only ONE of the two types. You should use the proper terminology for the learning, and describe and explain each term associated with it, and how learning occurs in that type of conditioning. Explain each part of the conditioning and the entire concept as if you are explaining it to someone who is not familiar with the type of learning you are describing. Do NOT use quotes from other sources (if you use quotes, I do not know if YOU understand the material) – use your OWN words. Be sure to include all relevant terms (and how they fit together) in your description. This section is worth 130 points. You will be graded on how clearly and accurately you explain how the learning occurs, as well as each component of the learning (and varieties/sub-concepts associated with it). Be sure to include the limits of the specific type of learning you are describing (In other words, what kinds of situations or behaviors are included in the learning, and what
types of behaviors are NOT included in the type of learning you are describing). Part I should NOT include your personal example. It need not include any examples at all, though sometimes it helps to include an example to clarify the concept. However, if you include an example, your description without the example should still be clear enough to understand the term/concept even without the example.

In Part II (also worth 130 points), you should give me a detailed example from YOUR personal life (not something you’ve merely read or heard about; YOU should have experienced it) that exemplifies the type of learning you have described in Part I. Be sure you are focusing on only the type of learning you’ve described in Part I, rather than both classical and operant conditioning. Once you have described your personal example thoroughly in your own words (told me the story, in other words), then point out where each of the sub-concepts applies. Be sure to have told the entire story first, though. So be sure to tell me how your behavior is now different than it was before the learning. In pointing out where each of the sub-concepts applies, for example, if you have described classical conditioning, be sure to identify which are your NS, UCS, UCR, etc., as well as whether extinction, discrimination, and generalization have occurred (and how you could tell). If you have described operant conditioning, be sure to identify each operant and the reinforcer and/or punisher, what kind it is, and how you know it is that type of reinforcer or punisher, as well as whether extinction, discrimination, and generalization have occurred (and how you could tell). If you choose operant conditioning you need to use more than one example. Use at least one example for reinforcement AND one example for punishment). If your example includes components from BOTH classical and operant conditioning (that happens in
real life quite a bit), be sure to focus on only the type of conditioning you are describing (you can tell me that one specific part of your example is really the other kind of learning, to let me know you understand the difference).

Your paper should be typewritten, DOUBLE-SPACED, using a font of size 12 or larger, with at least one inch margins all around. Two to 4 pages is usually adequate to cover the material well. Grammar, clarity, organization, spelling, and proper English usage will be considered part of the grade (40 points). Note: If you allow enough time, the Writing Center can help you with your writing problems; and remember you can earn extra credit for getting help from a writing consultant. Please proofread your paper for spelling and grammatical errors. I prefer you staple your paper together, rather than put it into a folder.