I was interested in animal behavior even as a child and did a research project with white mice when I was in high school. So when I arrived at Harvard College, I thought to concentrate in biology. At the start of spring semester of my freshman year, I was flipping through the catalogue to see what courses to take, when I saw one with “behavior” in its title: Nat Sci 114. I went to the first couple of classes and decided to take the course, taught by a professor called Skinner. He was not a great teacher, but the course was solid, and I found it interesting.

The students were divided into two groups: everyone attended lectures and section meetings, but one group read the textbook (Science and Human Behavior), and the other group used the teaching machines to cover the material in the textbook. I was in the group using teaching machines, and I enjoyed the programmed instruction a lot. That was how I discovered that one could learn about behavior in the Psychology department, which at that time was considered a natural science, because all the social-science parts of psychology were in the Social Relations department. That suited me just fine. The next semester, I took Psychology 141 with R. J. Herrnstein, who convinced me to switch my concentration from biology to psychology. That is how I became a behaviorist.

What you find here are my lecture notes, scribbled in class and edited in my room afterwards. Skinner lectured twice a week, and smaller section meetings taught by a graduate student, probably Sandy Autor, occurred once a week. The notes are dated, and the ones from the section meetings are labeled as “section.” One or two hour-exams would have occurred during the semester and a final three-hour exam at the end.

(Editor’s note: These class notes are available as a downloadable pdf.)