

PSY 458/558 - Judgment and Decision Making

Fall, 2010

T/Th, 4:00-5:20, 242 GER

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COURSE CONTENT/OBJECTIVES/PREREQUISITES

This course examines the psychology of human decision making and judgment. How do we make judgments? What influences our choices? We will cover basic models and strategies of decision making and look at applications of these models in a variety of fields, including consumer choice, medicine, law, and public opinion. We will try to integrate the study of judgment and decision-making with its psychological “neighbors,” social and cognitive psychology. Although a pronouncement of human decision making abilities as either “good” or “bad” is sort of pointless, we will touch on relative strengths and weaknesses and compare human judgment to various ideals and standards. In addition, we will look at possible ways that performance may be improved.

By the end of the course, you should have a good understanding of some of the major topics of study and how research in this field is conducted. The content of the course is research-based, meaning that the information taught is mostly derived from empirical research in the fields of judgment and decision making and cognitive and social psychology. Thus, you will not only study theories of judgment and decision making, but also study experiments and observations that have been carried out to test and demonstrate these theories. The readings in the reading packet are mostly “primary sources” -- that is to say, reprints of original journal articles. For this reason, Psychology 302 and 303 (Statistical Methods and Research Methods), or their equivalents, are required as prerequisites for this course.

In order to consolidate and reinforce your understanding of the topics in this course, you will be encouraged to look for examples of topics covered in class in the world around you. Take note of your own judgment and decision making and that of other people throughout the term.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to meet with me soon. Please request that the Counselor for Students with Disabilities send a letter verifying your disability.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Course readings: The required readings for this course are Rational Choice in an Uncertain World by Reid Hastie and Robin Dawes and the course readings that are available on Blackboard. With the exception of the 1st class, all reading assignments should be completed before lecture on the day they are listed on the syllabus. Some information in the reading will not be covered in class. Thus, you must do the reading to cover the full subject matter. Allow yourself ample time for doing ALL the readings in this class. Hastie and Dawes' book is written clearly and in an engaging style. The readings in the reading packet are mostly journal articles. You may find that they are harder to digest.

Class participation, Quizzes, and attendance: You are expected to attend class. Some topics not found in the reading will be covered in lecture. In addition, there will be some in-class activities in which you will be expected to participate. I do not grade for participation: However, in the event of borderline grades at the end of the semester, a solid history (read: not just raising your hand the last two weeks of class) of class participation can only help your cause. Furthermore, your contributions to the class are a potentially valuable resource to the other class members.

Quizzes: There are a total of six short quizzes that you will take during class. These will happen periodically throughout the semester and will cover the journal articles that you read in the course. The primary purpose of these quizzes is to encourage students to read and think about the readings and comprehension questions before attending class. Hence, when an article is assigned to be read, you can anticipate taking a quiz over that article at the beginning of the class.

Also, to receive credit for a quiz, you must attend the entire class in which the quiz is taken. If you leave class after you take the quiz, you will not get credit. I practice a zero-tolerance policy on this rule. **THE ONLY EXCEPTION TO THIS IS IF YOU HAVE A DOCUMENTED EXCUSE THAT YOU HAVE INFORMED ME ABOUT BEFORE CLASS BEGINS.** Each quiz will be worth 5 points. You will be able to drop your lowest quiz grade.

Quiz Make-Ups: I strongly recommend planning to attend EVERY class. If you miss a quiz, **you cannot make it up.** Let me repeat that: **You cannot make it up.** I reserve the right to grant exceptions, but don't count on being an exception.) If you know you must miss a class, I would appreciate you telling me in advance. A make-up quiz will be scheduled only if a student has a legitimate, university-sanctioned reason for missing the quiz (see Student Handbook) and only if the student follows the procedures listed here. The same protocol as exam make-up should be followed. Make-up quizzes must be completed within 5 days of the missed quiz, unless there is a documented university-sanctioned reason why the make-up quiz could not be taken by this deadline.

Exams: There will be 2 exams consisting of multiple-choice and essay/short answer questions. Exam questions will come from both lecture, textbook, and assigned readings. Doing well on the exams requires that you learn from the text, readings, and the lectures. The final will contain several short answer/short essay questions. The final exam is cumulative in the sense that you will be required to integrate concepts which recur throughout the course. In other words, for the final, I won't draw a test question directly from the book or material that was in the reading for the first half of the course. However, you should be able to apply broad theoretical concepts (i.e. recurring themes throughout the class) to new material. Graduate students and undergraduates will take different versions of the exams.

Exam Make-Ups: A make-up exam will be scheduled only if a student has a legitimate, university-sanctioned reason for missing the exam (see Student Handbook, which can be located through the University of Oregon website). If you can anticipate that you must miss an exam (e.g., participatory UO athletic event, religious holiday), contact me via phone or email at least one week prior to the exam. If you are unable to take an examination on time due to illness or an emergency, notify me before the examination is scheduled to begin by calling the psychology office at 541.346.4921 (leave a message) and sending me an email message. In other words, do not ask me to make-up an exam after the date unless there were EXTREME circumstances contributing to your absence (i.e. death of an immediate family member, hospitalization, etc). Please note that, in such cases, if you do not have documentation of such extreme circumstances, you will NOT be allowed to take the make-up exam and you will receive a 0 on the exam. Be prepared to take the make-up exam at the earliest possible date. When you come to take the make-up, you will need to bring a completed Explanatory Statement of Absence from Class Form and any relevant documentation.

The Paper: The paper assignment will be described in detail during a lecture later in the quarter. It will be approximately 10-15 pages in length and students will have approximately 4-5 weeks to complete the assignment. The paper assignment will be different for graduate and

undergraduate students. Your final draft of your term paper is due at the **beginning** of class on Monday, November 30, 2010. Papers turned in after the start of class are half a day late, with a 5% penalty, up until 4:30 pm of the due date; papers turned in after 4:30 are 1 day late with a 10% penalty. Each subsequent day rolls over at 4:30 pm, with an additional 10% penalty. Do not plan to skip class to finish your paper--your paper will be penalized anyway, and you will miss class and get behind.

“Decision Blog”: Each week, you are required to make an entry in your “decision blog.” These entries can be as short as a paragraph or two. They can be longer too, but should not ramble and should not exceed 1 page. These entries can address a variety of topics:

- a. Describe a decision you made, or observed someone else make. Why was it hard? Was it a good decision? Why or why not? (Note: For this one, the rules of TMI apply)
- b. Describe a research idea for a judgment or decision making study.
- c. Provide an example of something discussed in class (e.g., a heuristic), either from your life, someone else’s life or the media (e.g., the movies, news, or a song).
- d. Suggest a way of improving an institution, policy, or aspect of life, based upon what you have learned in this class.
- e. Comment on a report of judgment and decision making research (either in a journal, book, or news report)
- f. Report other thoughts that you have that are related to the subject matter of the class.

Entries are to be uploaded to Blackboard using the Journal feature by 5 pm each Friday. This is a zero-tolerance due date; That is, you will not receive credit if your entry is dated after 5:01p. You get two weeks “off” from submitting entries (your choice which weeks). If you write something every week, it is conceivable (but not assured) that extra entries may count towards extra credit.

GRADING

Quizzes 5@ 5 points each	25 points
Term paper:	50 points
Decision journals - 8 entries@5 points each :	40 points
Exams	200 points

There are a total of 315 points. Final grades will be curved upwards if I think it is necessary at the end of the quarter.

Academic Honesty

All work submitted in this course must be your own and ***produced exclusively*** for this course. Members of the university community are expected to be honest and forthright in their academic endeavors. To falsify the results of one's research, to present the words, ideas, data, or work of another as one's own, or to cheat on an examination corrupts the essential process by which knowledge is advanced. It is the official policy of the University of Oregon that all acts of alleged academic dishonesty by students be reported to the Director of Student Judicial Affairs in the Office of Students Life.

If you are ever unsure about whether a behavior constitutes cheating, please ask me or one of the teaching assistants. There is more information about plagiarism at:
<http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/>

Here is quote from that site:

Plagiarism is the inclusion of someone else's product, words, ideas, or data as one's own work. When a student submits work for credit that includes the product, words, ideas, or data of others, the source must be acknowledged by the use of complete, accurate, and specific references, such as footnotes.

All writing assignments will be checked thoroughly with **anti-plagiarism software**. By enrolling in this course you grant the instructor permission to do so.

Using Blackboard

The web site for this course was constructed using "Blackboard" software. This allows the web site to be extensive and interactive. On the web site, you will find general announcements for the class, all documents for the course (including this syllabus), on-line discussions, links to relevant web sites, and more. We hope that this web site will be a useful tool for you in learning the material for this class, and in further exploring topics you find interesting. You can get to the course web site by going to <http://blackboard.uoregon.edu>. If you need help logging in or using Blackboard, see <http://blackboard.uoregon.edu/local/usingbb/>. Also you can get help starting by going to the library Information Technology Center (ITC) and/or see [**http://libweb.uoregon.edu/kitc/faq/blackboard.html#help**](http://libweb.uoregon.edu/kitc/faq/blackboard.html#help).

CLASSROOM ETTIQUETTE

Talking in Class and Other Distractions

In order to respect the rights of other students, please **do not talk** while I am lecturing. If only 5% of the class talks during class, it is equivalent to the racket generated at a reasonably sized party! Talking makes it hard for other students to hear the lecture. Arriving late, leaving early, personal grooming, physical acts of affection towards other classmates, snapping the pages of *The Emerald* and loud snoring distract me and interfere with my ability to present the material clearly. If you would really prefer to do these activities, please don't come to class (although keep in mind you are responsible for material covered in class). Even if you are not interested in what I am saying, other people in the class may be, and your actions will detract from my ability to provide a good learning experience for them. If I find your behavior extremely disruptive, I may have to call attention to you to get you to stop or to ask you to leave. Please don't make me do this.

Turn your cell phone ringers OFF before coming to class.

Do not even think about taking or making a call during class unless you suspect terrorists have entered the classroom or one of your classmates is dying. Do not receive or send text messages during class. Do not make me ask you to stow your cell phone. Please, if you haven't realized by now, it is rude to be talking/texting while an instructor is teaching, no matter how boring you find the material to be, besides the fact that people are horrendously awful multi-taskers. If I ask you to put away your phone more than once, I may ask you to withdraw from the course or give you a failing grade for the class and ask you not to return. If a phone call is so important that you have to take it during class time, it is important enough to skip class for it – don't come to class if there is a phone call you know you must take (but keep in mind you are responsible for the material you miss in class).

Classroom "Climate"

It is my goal (although not always an achievable one) that you feel comfortable and respected – both by me and your peers – in this class. Please let me know if I or other students make you feel uncomfortable; ideally, something can be changed so you will feel more comfortable. If you feel that you or someone else has been the victim of bias in this class, you may consider contacting the Bias Response Team: <http://bias.uoregon.edu/index.html>

CLASS SCHEDULE:

Class Date	Topic	Readings
9/28	Introductions/ What is Judgment & Decision making	Chap 1-3; Weber & Johnson (2009)
9/30	Dual Process Models	Denes-Raj & Epstein (1994); Evans (2003)
10/5	Encoding/Accessibility	Holland et al. (2005); Bargh & Chartrand (1999); Strahan et al. (2002)
10/7	Anchoring and Adjustment	Chapter 4; Epley and Gilovich (2006)
10/12	Person Perception and Social Projection	Robbins & Krueger (2005) Weller & Watson (2009)
10/14	Heuristics and Biases I	Windschitl, P. D., Kruger, J., & Simms, E. N. (2003). Hsee & Hastie (2005)
10/19	Heuristics and Biases II (Kahneman & Tversky)	Chapter 5; Kahneman (2003)
10/21	Explanation-based Judgments	Chapter 6; Bryant & Brockway (1997)
10/26	EXAM I	MATERIAL UP TO 10/21
10/28	Perceptions of Cause and Chance	Chapter 7; Gilovich, Vallone, & Tversky (1985) PAPER ASSIGNED
11/2	Descriptive Theories of Rationality	Chapters 8, 11
11/4	Prospect Theory; Risk and Loss Aversion	Chapter 12
11/9	Risk and Uncertainty II	Slovic (1986) Weber, Blais, & Betz (2002)
11/11	Affect and Decision Making	Rottenstreich & Hsee (2001); Lerner et al. (2004); Chapman et al. (2009)
11/16	Decision Neuroscience	Bechara et al. (1997); Weller et al. (2007)
11/18	Decision Making across the Lifespan	Articles TBA
11/23	NO CLASS- At SJDM meeting	WORK ON PAPERS!!!
11/25	NO CLASS -Thanksgiving	
11/30	Social Influences	Prentice & Miller (1994); Plous (1993) PAPER DUE TODAY
12/2	Cultural Influences	Kahan et al. (2007, 2008)