Thinking – Psychology 330 (Summer Term, 2015)

Class time and location: MWTR, 2-3:50, 16 PAC

Instructor: Brett Mercier

Email: <u>bmercier@uoregon.edu</u>

Note about emails: Please use your official Oregon email to contact me (the one that ends with @uoregon.edu).

I will respond to emails during working hours (8am – 5pm, Monday to Friday) within 24 hours. If you email me on Monday at 9am, expect a response by Tuesday at 9am. If you email me on Friday at 5:30pm, expect a response sometime on Monday.

Office hours: 3:50 - 4:20pm, MWTR, 16 PAC (i.e. every day right after class, in our classroom). If you can't make it during these hours and would like to meet with me, email me and we can set up a meeting outside of these hours.

Textbook: Kahneman, D., Thinking, Fast and Slow

All other required readings to be posted on Blackboard

Course description: Psychological methods involved in problem solving, complex learning, and various forms of rational and irrational reasoning and belief systems.

Rough Outline:

This course will roughly cover the following topics. Each of the four sections of the course is designed to take around a week, but may take more or less time.

- 1. How does thinking work?
- E.g. Philosophy of Science, Dual process model of cognition, Priming 2. When do we make systematic errors in judgement?
 - E.g. Cognitive heuristics, Why we suck at probabilities and understanding randomness
- 3. Thinking about others
 - E.g. Social Cognition, Persuasion, Morality
- 4. Rational and Irrational Belief Systems
 - E.g. Naive realism, bias blind spot, Meaning Maintenance Model

Note: this is a rough outline of the topics I intend to cover. However, I may alter or add to these topics depending on our schedule.

Tests:

Test 1: Monday, June 29 at the beginning of class

Test 2: Monday, July 6th at the beginning of class

Test 3: Monday, July 13th at the beginning of class

Cumulative Final Exam: Thursday, **July 16th** in PAC 16 from 2-4pm (i.e. during the last class). Schedule permitting, I intend to hold a review session for at least part of the class on the day before the final (Wednesday July 15th).

Paper:

There will be one reflection paper, which can be turned in **any time before July 12 @11:59pm** (see assignment portal on blackboard). Late papers will be accepted up until July 16th @ 11:59pm, with no penalty. **No papers will be accepted after July 16th for any reason**, and late papers will not receive any feedback.

Description of Paper assignment:

Pick one cognitive heuristic or decision making strategy covered in this course (feel free to email me if you have questions about what is an acceptable paper topic). Describe the heuristic in detail. Explain both how this heuristic can be useful (or was useful in our evolutionary past) and how it can lead people to make poor decisions. Give a specific, real world example of a situation where this heuristic often leads people to make poor decisions, and describe a more effective way for people to make better decisions in this situation.

Word limit: 500 words.

Please submit your paper via blackboard, in a Microsoft word document. If you submit a pages document, I will not be able to open it.

Grading rubric:

Description of heuristic /5 Explanation of how the heuristic can be useful in some situations (or was useful in our evolutionary past) /5 Explanation of how the heuristic can lead people make poor decisions /10 Example of situation where heuristic leads to errors, and description of better decision making strategy /10 Grammar, spelling, readability /10 Total /40

Paper exceeds 500 word limit -10

Cheating and Plagiarism:

Cheating is morally wrong and will have serious consequences.

Missed tests:

If you cannot be here for any of the test dates, please let me know as soon as possible.

Grades:

Grade distribution:

Test 1	18%
Test 2	18%
Test 3	18%
Paper	10%
Final exam (cumulative)	36%

Grades will be assigned in the following way:

97-100%= A+ 93-96.99%= A 90-92.99%= A-87-89.99%= B+ 83-86.99%= B 80-82.99%= B-77-79.99%= C+ 73-76.99%= C+ 73-76.99%= C 67-69.99%= D 63-66.99%= D 59.99-below= F

I reserve the right to curve the final grades, but it is unlikely that I will do so. Individual course grades cannot be changed unless it is to correct an error in grading.

Students with Disabilities: If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to meet with me as soon as possible.

Topics and reading for week one: (readings for the rest of the class will be posted to canvas)

- 1. Intro and Philosophy of science truth is a model (reading on canvas)
- 2. Dual process model Kahneman, pages 19-38 and pages 44-49.
- 3. Priming and schemas Kahneman pages 50-105.
- 4. Randomness, anchoring & availability heuristics Kahneman pages 109-146.