The University of Texas at El Paso  
Department of Psychology  
Judgment and Decision Making (PSYC 4321, CRN 14914)  
Fall 2016

Instructor: Abdolhossein Abdollahy Zarandi, PhD  
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Office: Department of Psychology  
Class Days: Tuesdays and Thursdays: 10:30 am -11:50 am  
Location: Liberal Arts Building 323  
Office Hours: Tuesdays from 12 to 2 pm (to make an appointment, please email me.)

Course Objectives and Description

The main objective of this course is to help students explore and understand the basic theories and research findings in the field of judgment and decision making. Another objective is to help students improve their judgments and decisions. The course revolves around how we make judgments and decisions consciously and unconsciously. It also uncovers the debate between economists -- who believe that humans are rational and are able to make sound and perfect judgments and decisions -- and psychologists who find that humans are prone to making lots of cognitive errors/biases that, under certain circumstances, make them irrational judges and decision makers. Some sample topics include the role --in judgment and decision making-- of cognitive biases and heuristics, covariation and causation, and overconfidence/optimism.

Course Text


Course Format

Tuesdays: lectures and student participation  
Thursdays: lectures and student participation

Course Assignment

Review paper

One goal of this course is to help students boost up their skills and knowledge in the area of judgment and decision making research and inquiry. An exciting starting point to attain this goal is to choose a peer-reviewed published on the topic and analyze and critique/evaluate it. For this
endeavor, you are expected to pick a paper from the journals called *Judgment and Decision Making* or *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making*. You can access both journals by going to the UTEP website library page (www.utep.edu/library). When you are there, you will see a search box, type in the name of the journal, click the search button and then select your paper by browsing the journal issues. After making your choice, allocate some time to read various parts of your selected paper -- which usually consists of such main sections as Abstract, Introduction, Method, Results, and Discussion.

When you start reading, take a deep look at the abstract and get a feel of the whole work. If you find issues/problems with this section, jot them down. Then, go to the Introduction section and see how the authors have reviewed literature and what their research questions, main purpose, and hypotheses are. If you find issues with this section, jot them down. You will encounter the Method section after learning about the question, purpose, and hypotheses. Here try to zero in on a description of the study participants, research design, measures used, and the procedure. Again don’t forget to take note of possible issues. Results come after the Method section. Examine them carefully and see, for example, if the statistical methods used are appropriately chosen. The last section will be the Discussion section. Read through it and check out if the authors have discussed their findings in an expected way.

After carefully reading the paper and detecting possible issues/problems in the various sections of the paper, namely, Abstract, Introduction, Method, Results, and Discussion, begin writing up your review which will revolve around those detected issues. But before that you will summarize the paper in a few paragraphs. It is a good point to begin your review. After this summarization section, you will open another section in which you will highlight your agreement points with the authors; it is impossible for our thoughts to be absolutely at odds with those of our peers. Then you will focus on the paper issues as perceived by you. Feel free to bring up any format or conceptual issue. But the tone is expected to be soft and productive rather than tough and unproductive. All in all, you will write a paper consisting of three parts:

A) a summary of the paper in your own word (4 points),
B) a summary of your points of agreement with the authors (2 points), and
C) your perceived issues on the paper’s style and content (4 points)

You are free to write your paper in any style you like, of course, as long as it can get its message across clearly and coherently. But, on the other hand, the American Psychological Association has an array of recommendations for writing in psychology. Those recommendations have been gathered in a book called “Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6th Edition).” Find a paper copy at the UTEP main library or on an El Paso Public Library branch book shelf. You can also get more information by googling this phrase: “apa style.” You can use these guidelines to shape your paper. But keep in mind please that we will talk more about this review paper throughout the semester. As for this paper submission method, on Blackboard, you will see an icon for uploading; just click on the icon and post your digital paper copy. And finally, like almost all class papers, there is a deadline for this paper. The deadline is **November 28, 2016**.
Class Attendance and Participation

Class attendance is expected because you can learn better when you are physically present. Also, there will be two unannounced quizzes throughout the semester. Missing a quiz means losing an influential portion of the final grade.

Class participation is important and has its own points as shown below. Class participation involves two parts: Part 1) Showing such behaviors and attitudes as active listening to the lectures and other students, giving opinion during class discussions, asking questions, and being respectful to others and Part 2) Taking part in an activity I call “In a Cool Huddle”. In this activity, students are expected to discuss some topics in groups of 2, 3, or 4 and report, in writing, the results of their discussions at the end of the class sessions.

Quizzes and Exams

You will take two random unannounced quizzes, a midterm exam, and a final exam throughout the semester (see Course Assessment below). The quizzes and exams consist of multiple-choice items. The exams dates are specified in the course timetable (see below). Each quiz begins at 12 and takes 15-20 minutes to finish. Note that each question on the quizzes and exams counts one percent towards the final grade. Also, please keep in mind that the possibility of a quiz or exam makeup is zero. If you, for some reason, couldn’t attend a quiz or exam, let me know to deal with it.

Course Assessment

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<th>Quiz 1</th>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Quiz 2</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Review Paper</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>In-Class Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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Grading Scale

- 90% - 100% = A
- 80% - 89.9% = B
- 70% - 79.9% = C
- 60% - 69.9% = D
- 00% - 59.9% = F

Classroom Behavior

Please turn off your cell phone on arrival. Don’t talk when others are talking. If you want to ask a question or make a comment, raise your hand and try not to interrupt others as they speak. Don’t use your computer for irrelevant in-class activities such as emailing, visiting a social network profile, playing games, watching videos, listening to music and so on. These activities
prevent you from focusing on lectures and other class engagements and may distract other students.

Disability

If you have a disability and need classroom accommodations, please contact The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at 747-5148, or by email to cass@utep.edu, or visit their office located in UTEP Union East, Room 106. For additional information, please visit the CASS website at www.sa.utep.edu/cass.

Academic Conduct, Discipline, and Integrity

It is assumed that students are implicitly aware of the principles of academic conduct, discipline, and integrity. But having an explicit knowledge of the principles will be highly beneficial for anybody working within the realm of academia. The following link provides a wide-range information about academic conduct and discipline at UTEP. Please read the file carefully and enthusiastically:

http://admin.utep.edu/LinkClick.aspx?link=HOOP-Section+II.pdf&tabid=30181&mid=63285

Course Timetable and Lecture Topic

Week 1
August 23: Chapter 1: Judgments, Decisions, and Rationality
August 25: Chapter 1: Judgments, Decisions, and Rationality

Week 2
August 30: Chapter 2: The Nature and Analysis of Judgment
September 1: Chapter 2: The Nature and Analysis of Judgment

Week 3
September 6: Chapter 3: Judging Probability and Frequency
September 8: Chapter 3: Judging Probability and Frequency
Week 4

September 13: Chapter 4: Judgmental Distortions: The Anchoring-and-Adjustment Heuristic and Hindsight Bias

September 15: Chapter 4: Judgmental Distortions: The Anchoring-and-Adjustment Heuristic and Hindsight Bias

Week 5

September 20: Chapter 5: Assessing Evidence and Evaluating Arguments

September 22: Chapter 5: Assessing Evidence and Evaluating Arguments

Week 6

September 27: Chapter 6: Covariation, Causation, and Counterfactual Thinking

September 29: Chapter 6: Covariation, Causation, and Counterfactual Thinking

Week 7

October 4: Midterm Exam

October 6: Chapter 7: Decision Making under Risk and Uncertainty

Week 8

October 11: Chapter 7: Decision Making under Risk and Uncertainty

October 13: Chapter 8: Preference and Choice

Week 9

October 18: Chapter 8: Preference and Choice

October 20: Chapter 9: Confidence and Optimism

Week 10

October 25: Chapter 9: Confidence and Optimism

October 27: Chapter 10: Judgment and Choice over Time
Week 11

November 1: Chapter 10: Judgment and Choice over Time

November 3: Chapter 12: Risk

Week 12

November 8: Chapter 12: Risk

November 10: Chapter 13: Decision Making in Groups and Teams

Week 13

November 15: Chapter 13: Decision Making in Groups and Teams

November 17: Chapter 14: Cooperation and Coordination

Week 14

November 22: Chapter 14: Cooperation and Coordination

November 24: Chapter 15: Intuition, Reflective Thinking, and the Brain

Week 15

November 29: Chapter 15: Intuition, Reflective Thinking, and the Brain

December 1: Review

December 8: Final Exam at 10 am – 12:45 pm

This syllabus is subject to change.