

The University of Texas at El Paso
Department of Psychology
Judgment and Decision Making (PSYC 4321, CRN 24348)
A Spring 2024 Syllabus

Instructor: Dr. Abdolhossein Abdollahy Zarandi

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Office: Department of Psychology

Class Days: Monday and Wednesday: 4:30 pm – 5:50 pm

Location: Psychology Building, Room 308

Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays: 2:00 pm –3:00 pm. (to make an appointment, please email me.)

Communication

In addition to in-class face-to-face communication, students can contact me via email. I will check my email multiple times per day Monday through Friday, and also during weekends. However, please allow 24 hours for a response (48 hours if you send a message Friday evening or during the weekend). Each email you send me should contain a subject line that includes “PSYC 4321”, a proper greeting (i.e., Dear Dr. Abdollahy Zarandi), and your full name. All emails you send me should come from your UTEP email account. Questions regarding the course and its content are expected to be emailed to me at aabdollahyzarandi@utep.edu. Note: Blackboard has a Course Messages tool, but before using this tool, please try emailing me via aabdollahyzarandi@utep.edu

Blackboard

This course will use Blackboard as an additional learning-teaching platform. I will make announcements regarding the course via Blackboard periodically. Please check Blackboard for announcements (by clicking on the link **Announcements**). Blackboard is also a place where you will find some course-related information and materials, for example, the textbook PowerPoint slides files. When, especially for the first time, you visit Blackboard, look at the left side of the screen (the dark menu) to learn about **Announcements**.

Course description

This course presents a number of interconnected subjects pertaining to “judgment” and “decision making”: two purely higher-order cognitive processes that combine with “problem-solving”, another cognitive process, to define our human-scale intelligence. The psychology of judgment and decision making is about rationality (“good” optimal judgment and decision making) and irrationality (“bad” nonoptimal judgment and decision making). It mainly concerns itself with studying a set of cognitive mistakes (i.e., errors or biases) such as the availability and representativeness biases. But it also examines, among many other subjects, “risk perception”, “covariation”, “framing effects”, and “causality.”

Learning objectives/outcomes

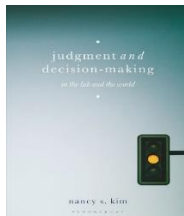
By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. understand the main concepts in judgments and decision making.
2. Identify a number of cognitive biases that affect judgment and decision making.
3. Explain the major theories and empirical findings in the field of judgment and decision making.
4. apply their judgment and decision making knowledge.
5. Think critically about the judgment and decision making research findings and theorizing.

Course Text

Kim, Nancy, S. (2017). Judgment and Decision-Making: In the Lab and the World (1st edition). Macmillan.

<https://www.macmillanihe.com/page/detail/Judgment-and-DecisionMaking/?K=9781137269553>



Course Format

Lectures will cover the assigned textbook, chapter by chapter. Lectures will also bring in material from external sources. Therefore, students are expected to be present in class in order to not miss the out-of-the-text-book materials as they may appear on the quiz and/or exam questions. Moreover, students are expected to read each book chapter before class and be ready to respond to possible in-lecture questions, start discussions or provide comments. Additionally, the student oral presentation will be another important part of the class presentation format.

Course Assignments, Participation, and Activities

1) Instructor-Facilitated Student Oral Presentations

Students are expected to give a talk on an assigned book chapter subject. The oral presentation, facilitated by me (Dr. Abdol), may take two forms: Individual presentation or up-to-5-member group presentation. During the initial class meetings, students will be scheduled to give their talk. A user-friendly **rubric** appears below:

1. The inclusion, in the oral presentation, of at least 15 PowerPoint slides (2 points)
2. The inclusion, in the oral presentation, of at least two topic-related short (not more than 3 minutes) video adapted from a valid Internet source (2 points)
3. The inclusion, in the oral presentation, of at least 5 questions to be posed to the audience (1 point)
4. The inclusion, in the oral presentation, of at least 15 questions, ideas, and comments that show the presentation group's disagreement with the content. (2 points)
5. The demonstration of a clear and coherent oral presentation (1 point)
6. The submission by the group leader, on Blackboard, of a 500-word summary of the entire oral presentation by the final exam day (2 points)

2) In-Class Activities and Participation

At the end of each class meeting -- right after each lecture -- students will engage in a series of in-class activities individually and/or in groups. The activities will enable students to think and write about, examine, and discuss various topics in cross-cultural psychology.

3) Research Paper

Research Project Paper: *up to 5 points.* You will write a research paper on a topic in judgment and decision making. More instructions will be posted to Blackboard. One of the goals of this course is to help students investigate a topic in judgment and decision making. An exciting starting point to attain this goal is to do a small-scale empirical, perhaps online, study and write it up as a research paper. There are many interesting topics to choose from. As we cover the various chapters of the textbook, you will be able to decide what you prefer to work on. The beauty of research in judgment and decision making is its simplicity. You can conduct an experiment in a single one-hour session with a few participants -- and only with one or two simple questions! After doing your study, you will write your small-scale work up and submit it to Blackboard. The paper is expected to contain at least **1000** words, excluding references. The final report will consist of five main sections including:

- a) **Abstract and Introduction (1 point)**
- b) **Method (1 point)**
- c) **Results (1 point)**
- d) **Discussion (1 point)**
- e) **References (1 point)**

The deadline for submitting the paper to Blackboard will be **May 3, 2024**. During the first weeks of the semester, I will provide more information via Blackboard. Let me add that you are very welcome to ask me any questions you may have about this research activity.

Quizzes and Exams

You will take, throughout the semester, two quizzes, a midterm exam, and a final exam (see Course Assessment below). The quizzes and exams will mainly consist of multiple choice and each item on the quizzes and exams counts one percent towards the final grade. The quizzes and exams dates are specified in the course schedule (see below). Finally, it is to be noted that the content of the quizzes and exams will come from both the lectures and the textbook chapters.

Class Attendance, Participation, and Course Drop

Class attendance is expected because you can learn better when you are physically present. If a student has more than four unexcused absences throughout the semester, they will lose a possible extra credit opportunity. Also, please note that if you are in a situation in which you need or plan to drop the course, you are expected to do it by yourself. If you don't drop the course, your final grade will be reported based on your available quiz, exam, and participation grade record.

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 to other

students, making comments during class discussions, asking questions, and being respectful to others and Part 2) taking part in discussion activities. In this assignment, students are expected to discuss some topics in groups of 2-4 and report the results of their discussions at the end of the class sessions.

Extra Credit Assignment Possibility

If needed, students can choose to do a possible extra credit assignment to increase their final grades. But it comes with a condition: students can use this possible assignment only if they do not have a noticeable history of unexcused absences.

Late Work Policy

Generally writing, I do not accept late work but in the possible and potential case of receiving late assignment performance requests which are supported by one or a set of documented reasons, the request and its associated work will be considered for acceptance without the implementation of any grade reductions.

Course Assessment

1. Quiz 1	10%
2. Quiz 2	10%
3. Midterm Exam	25%
4. Final Exam	30%
5. Oral Presentation	10%
6. Research Paper	5%
7. In-Class Activities	10%

Total	100%
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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.

Accommodations Policy (quoted directly from a UTEP administrative source)

The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and auxiliary services to students, staff, faculty, job applicants, applicants for admissions, and other beneficiaries of University programs, services and activities with documented disabilities in order to provide them with equal opportunities to participate in programs, services, and activities in compliance with sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. Reasonable accommodations will be made unless it is determined that doing so would cause undue hardship on the University. Students requesting an accommodation based on a disability must register with the [UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services](#) (CASS). Contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services at 915-747-5148, or email them at cass@utep.edu, or apply for accommodations online via the [CASS portal](#).

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: <https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/osccr/student-conduct/academic-integrity.html>

Course Schedule and Lecture Topics

Week 1

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Week 2

CHAPTER 2: Availability and Representativeness

Week 3

CHAPTER 3: Anchoring and Primacy Effects in Judgment

Week 4

CHAPTER 4: Hindsight Bias – Quiz 1

Week 5

CHAPTER 5: Risk Perception

Week 6

CHAPTER 6: Prediction

Week 7

CHAPTER 7: Choice and Mental Accounting

Week 8

CHAPTER 8: Expected Utility Theory **Midterm Exam**

Week 9

March 11, 2024, Spring Break

Week 10

CHAPTER 8: Expected Utility Theory

Week 11

CHAPTER 9: Framing Effects and Prospect Theory

Week 12

CHAPTER 10: Schemas and Framework Theories

Week 13

CHAPTER 11: Judging Covariation, Contingency, and Cause **Quiz 2**

Week 14

CHAPTER 12: Hypothesis Testing and Confirmation Bias

Week 15

Chapter 13: Belief

Week 16

Chapter 14: Moral Judgment and Cooperation

Final Exam: May 6 from 4:00 pm to 6:45 pm

This syllabus is subject to change.