The University of Texas at El Paso  
Department of Psychology  
Judgment and Decision making (PSYC 4321)  
Spring 2015

Instructor: Abdolhossein Abdollahy Zarandi, PhD  
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Office: Department of Psychology, Room 116  
Class Days: Monday and Wednesday: 4:30 pm - 5:50 pm  
Where: Quinn Hall 203  
Office Hours: Wednesday, 10 am -12 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 them improve their judgments and decisions. This all will lead students to do a small-scale research in the domain and report it in a paper. 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 a big basket of cognitive errors/biases that, under certain circumstances, makes 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 Texts


Course Format

Monday: Lectures and Student Participation

Wednesday: Lectures and Student Participation

Course Research Project

One goal 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 study and write it up.
There are many interesting topics to choose from. As we cover various chapters of the textbooks, you will be able to decide what you prefer to work on. The beauty of the 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 equipped with only one or two simple questions! That’s it. After doing your study, you will write your masterpiece up and submit it --in a Microsoft Word format -- for grading. The paper will be between 1800 to 2000 words, excluding the references and appendices. The report will consist of five main parts including a) Abstract and Introduction, b) Method, c) Results, d) Discussion, and e) References and Appendices. Each part will be assigned 4 points (4% of the final grade). So this assignment counts 20 points (20%) towards the final grade. The deadline for submitting a softcopy and a hardcopy will be May 4, 2015. During the first weeks of the semester, I will talk about the assignment at length. You are also welcome to come see me and/or email me for consultation and discussion.

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 4:30 pm and takes 15 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.

Class Attendance and Participation

Class attendance is important because you can learn better when you are physically present. In each lecture, a set of information and material – coming from outside the textbooks -- will turn up which empowers you to master-learn the topic. Try not to miss the lectures. Additionally, there will be two random unannounced quizzes throughout the semester (both on Mondays and Wednesdays). Missing a quiz means losing an influential portion of the final grade.

Class participation is important too and it 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 and report the results of their discussions at the end of the class sessions.
Course Assessment

1. Judgment and Decision Making Project Paper 20%
2. Class participation 10%
3. Two quizzes, each 10% 20%
4. Midterm and Final Exams, each 25% 50%

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 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

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Week 1

January 19: No classes

January 21: Introduction, Chapter 1, Hardman; Chapter 1, Bazerman and Moore

Week 2

January 26: Chapter 2, Hardman

January 28: Chapter 2, Hardman

Week 3

February 2: Chapter 3, Hardman; Chapter 3, Bazerman and Moore

February 4: Chapter 3, Hardman; Chapter 3, Bazerman and Moore

Week 4

February 9: Chapter 4, Hardman

February 11: Chapter 4, Hardman

Week 5

February 16: Chapter 5, Hardman

February 18: Chapter 5, Hardman

Week 6

February 23: Chapter 6, Hardman

February 25: Chapter 6, Hardman
Week 7
March 2: **Midterm Exam**
March 4: Chapter 7, Hardman

Week 8
March 9: No classes
March 11: No classes

Week 9
March 16: Chapter 7, Hardman
March 18: Chapter 8, Hardman

Week 10
March 23: Chapter 8, Hardman
March 25: **Chapter 9, Hardman; Chapter 2, Bazerman and Moore**

Week 11
March 30: **Chapter 9, Hardman; Chapter 2, Bazerman and Moore**
April 1: Chapter 10, Hardman

Week 12
April 6: Chapter 10, Hardman
April 8: Chapter 12, Hardman

Week 13
April 13: Chapter 12, Hardman
April 15: Chapter 13, Hardman

Week 14
April 20: Chapter 13, Hardman
April 22: **Chapter 8, Bazerman and Moore**
Week 15

April 27: Chapter 8, Bazerman and Moore

April 29: Chapter 12, Bazerman and Moore

Week 16

May 4: Chapter 12, Bazerman and Moore

May 6: Review

May 11-15: Final Exams

Note. This syllabus is tentative and subject to change depending upon the class progress.