

**The University of Texas at El Paso**  
**Department of Psychology**  
**Judgment and Decision Making (PSYC 4321, CRN 27375)**  
**Spring 2022**

**Instructor: Dr. Abdolhossein Abdollahy Zarandi**

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**Office:** Department of Psychology

**Class Days:** Tuesday and Thursday: 4:30 pm – 5:50 pm

**Location:** Liberal Arts Building, Room 108

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays and Thursdays: 3:30 – 4:30 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](mailto:aabdollahyzarandi@utep.edu). Note: Blackboard has a Course Messages tool, but before using this tool, please try emailing me via [aabdollahyzarandi@utep.edu](mailto: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 (1<sup>st</sup> 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.

## **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 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 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 the references. The final report will consist of five main sections including:

- a) Abstract and Introduction
- b) Method
- c) Results
- d) Discussion
- e) References

Two points will be assigned to each paper section. The deadline for submitting the paper to Blackboard will be **May 6, 2022**. 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 an activity I call "In a Cool Huddle". In this activity, 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.

### **Course Assessment**

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

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<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>
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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](mailto:cass@utep.edu), or visit their office located in UTEP Union East, Room 106. For additional information, please visit the CASS website at <https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/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:

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

## **Covid-19 Precautions**

Please stay home if you have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. If you are feeling unwell, please let me know as soon as possible, so that we can work on appropriate accommodations. If you have tested positive for COVID-19, you are encouraged to report your results to [covidaction@utep.edu](mailto:covidaction@utep.edu), so that the Dean of Students Office can provide you with support and help with communication with your professors. The Student Health Center is equipped to provide COVID 19 testing.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that people in areas of substantial or high COVID-19 transmission wear face masks when indoors in groups of people. The best way that Miners can take care of Miners is to get the vaccine. If you still need the vaccine, it is widely available in the El Paso area, and will be available at no charge. For more information about the current rates, testing, and vaccinations, please visit [epstrong.org](http://epstrong.org).

## 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**

**Thursday: Midterm Exam**

### **Week 9**

**No Classes**

### **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**

**Week 14**

**CHAPTER 12: Hypothesis Testing and Confirmation Bias Quiz 2**

**Week 15**

**CHAPTER 13: Belief**

**Week 16**

**CHAPTER 14: Moral Judgment and Cooperation**

**Final Exam: May 10, from 4:00 pm to 6:45 pm**

**This syllabus is subject to change.**