

Judgment and Decision Making (PSYC10) Syllabus

Fall 2017

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*Professor*

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Office Hours:

Mondays 3-4 PM, SW 569

*TAs*

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## **Introduction**

This course has two objectives. The first is to improve the quality of students' decisions. Students will learn to be aware of and to avoid common inferential errors and systematic biases in their own decision making. The second objective is to improve students' ability to predict and influence the behavior of others. By understanding how other people decide and behave, students will be better able to motivate desired behavior in others.

This course accomplishes this by expanding the toolbox provided by standard economics (incentives and education) to include tools of influence prescribed by a realistic understanding of human behavior. We will cover classic and contemporary theories and empirical findings in judgment and decision-making, including perspectives from social and cognitive psychology, behavioral economics, decision analysis, and other fields.

## **Readings**

There is no textbook for this course. Instead, there is a list of required readings, which are posted on Blackboard according to their due dates. Whenever possible, I have chosen readings that are well-written, accessible, and apply the core concepts of this course to real-world issues.

## **Grading Criteria**

Midterm Exam: 30%

Final Exam: 30%

Quizzes: 10%

Online Surveys and Data Collection Assignment: 15%

Short Paper: 15%

## **Midterm and Final Exams**

The midterm and final exam will each count for 30% of your grade. The midterm covers the material (readings and lectures) from weeks 1-5, and the final covers weeks 6-10 (i.e., the final is not cumulative). Exams may include short answers, essays, and multiple-choice questions. The midterm will be held in class on October 19. The final exam will be scheduled by the registrar.

## **Quizzes**

Starting in Week 2 (September 14) there will be a 50% chance of having to take a short quiz that tests your knowledge of the readings assigned that day. Whether or not you have a quiz will be determined by a random number generator, which means that having a quiz one week is not predictive of whether you will have a quiz the next week (i.e., don't fall prey to the gambler's fallacy!). These quizzes are designed to test whether you have carefully read all that you have been assigned to. As long as you read carefully and retain the most important information, you should not have to study for these quizzes. Most of

the quizzes will require you to summarize one (or more) of the readings, but other quiz formats (e.g., multiple choice; short answer) are possible. Each quiz will be graded on a scale ranging from 0 to 2. You will receive a score of zero if you are absent or late for a quiz.

### **Online Surveys, Data Collection, and Short Paper**

During the semester, I will ask you to do online surveys and to collect data out of class. I will also ask you to write a short (2-page) paper applying what you have learned. These assignments will be described in more detail later in the semester.

### **Blackboard**

The course Blackboard website will be your one-stop resource for all course documents, lectures, announcements, and supplementary information. Lecture notes (PDF copies of the slides) will be available on the Blackboard site the evening AFTER each lecture. You are highly advised to regularly check Blackboard announcements because you are solely responsible for staying on top of all course announcements made through Blackboard.

### **Office Hours**

Office hours are a great way to get answers to specific questions you may have. I will hold office hours each week except for the Fall Reading Week, beginning the week of September 11. (I may have to cancel certain office hours due to travel, but if this is the case there will be an announcement posted on Blackboard.)

### **List of Lectures and Readings**

#### **Week 1: Sept. 7      Introduction & Experimental methods**

- Thinking About Thinking (Watts)

#### **Week 2: Sept. 14      Statistical reasoning**

- Fairness and Justice (Watts)
- The Odds of That (Belkin)

#### **Week 3: Sept. 21      Statistical reasoning II; Heuristics and biases**

- Going Viral (Lewis)
- Connecting the Dots (Gladwell)

#### **Week 4: Sept. 28      Overconfidence & Motivated reasoning**

- Dr. Drug Rep (Calat)
- Are You Smarter than a Television Pundit? (Silver)
- Why Good Accountants Do Bad Audits (Bazerman)

#### **Week 5: Oct. 5      Intuitive vs. Statistical decision-making**

- Big and Bad (Gladwell)

- Who's on First? (Thaler)
- The No-Stats All Star (Lewis)

**Oct. 12**                      **No class: Fall break**

**Oct. 19**                      **Midterm exam**

**Week 6: Oct. 26**        **Aggregating Opinions**

- The Wisdom of Crowds (Surowiecki)

**Week 7: Nov. 2**        **Value construction I**

- Reversals (Kahneman)
- Bernoulli's Errors (Kahneman)

**Nov 9**                      **No class: Prof. Inbar out of town**

**Week 8: Nov 16**        **Value construction II**

- Prospect Theory (Kahneman)
- Risk Policies (Kahneman)

**Week 9: Nov 23**        **Fairness**

- What Seems Fair (Thaler)
- Fairness Games (Thaler)

**Week 10: Nov 30**      **Nudges**

- Nudge, pp. 1-14 (Thaler)
- You Need Hands (Underhill)
- When Doctors Make Mistakes (Gawande)

**Other useful information about course policies and procedures**

**Missed Term Work due to Medical Illness or Other Emergency:**

All students citing a documented reason for missed term work must bring their documentation to the Psychology Course Coordinator in SW427C **within three (3) business days** of the assignment due date. You must bring the following:

1. A completed [Request for Missed Term Work form](http://uoft.me/PSY-MTW) (<http://uoft.me/PSY-MTW>), and
2. Appropriate documentation to verify your illness or emergency, as described below.

**Appropriate Documentation:**

In the case of missed term work due to **illness**, only an **original copy** of the official [UTSC Verification of Illness Form](http://uoft.me/UTSC-Verification-Of-Illness-Form) will be accepted (<http://uoft.me/UTSC-Verification-Of-Illness-Form>). Forms are to be **completed in full**, clearly indicating the start date, anticipated end date, and severity of illness. The physician's registration number and business stamp are required.

In the case of **medical emergency**, an original copy of the record of visitation to a hospital emergency room should be provided.

In the case of a **death of a family member**, a copy of a death certificate should be provided.

In the case of a **disability-related** concern, an email communication should be sent directly to the Course Coordinator ([psychology-undergraduate@utsc.utoronto.ca](mailto:psychology-undergraduate@utsc.utoronto.ca)) from your Disability Consultant at AccessAbility Services, detailing the accommodations required. The Course Instructor should also be copied on this email.

For U of T **Varsity athletic commitments**, an email communication should be sent directly to the Course Coordinator ([psychology-undergraduate@utsc.utoronto.ca](mailto:psychology-undergraduate@utsc.utoronto.ca)) from a coach or varsity administrator, detailing the dates and nature of the commitment. The email should be sent **well in advance** of the missed work.

Documents covering the following situations are **NOT acceptable**: medical prescriptions, anything related to personal travel, weddings/personal/work commitments.

**Procedure:**

Submit your [request form](#) and [medical](#)/other documents in person **within 3 business days** of the missed test or assignment. Forms should be submitted to **SW427C between 9 AM - 4 PM**, Monday through Friday. If you are unable to meet this deadline for some reason, you must contact the Course Coordinator via email ([psychology-undergraduate@utsc.utoronto.ca](mailto:psychology-undergraduate@utsc.utoronto.ca)) within the three business day window. Exceptions to the documentation deadline will only be made under exceptional circumstances.

Within approximately one week, you will receive an email response from the Course Instructor / Course Coordinator detailing the accommodations to be made (if any). You are responsible for checking your official U of T email and Blackboard course announcements daily, as accommodations may be time-critical. The Course Instructor reserves the right to decide what accommodations (if any) will be made for the missed work.

**Failure to adhere to any aspect of this policy may result in a denial of your request for accommodation.**

Note that this policy applies only to missed term work (assignments and midterms). Missed final exams are handled by the Registrar's Office (<http://www.utoronto.ca/registrar/missing-examination>)

### **AccessAbility:**

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the AccessAbility Services as soon as possible.

AccessAbility Services staff (located in Rm SW302, Science Wing) are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations [416-287-7560](tel:416-287-7560) or email [ability@utoronto.ca](mailto:ability@utoronto.ca). The sooner you let us know your needs the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.

### **Academic Integrity:**

Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of Toronto is a strong signal of each student's individual academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/PDF/ppjun011995.pdf>) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

In papers and assignments:

- Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement;
- Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor;
- Making up sources or facts;
- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment.

On tests and exams:

- Using or possessing unauthorized aids;
- Looking at someone else's answers during an exam or test;
- Misrepresenting your identity; and
- When you knew or ought to have known you were doing it.

In academic work:

- Falsifying institutional documents or grades;
- Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor's notes; and
- When you knew or ought to have known you were doing so.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. If students have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, they are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from their instructors or from other institutional resources.

Note:

You may see advertisements for services offering grammar help, essay editing and proof-reading. Be very careful. If these services take a draft of your work and significantly change the content and/or language, you may be committing an academic offence (unauthorized assistance) under the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters*.

It is much better and safer to take your draft to the Writing Centre as early as you can. They will give you guidance you can trust. Students for whom English is not their first language should go to the English Language Development Centre.

If you decide to use these services in spite of this caution, you must keep a draft of your work and any notes you made before you got help and be prepared to give it to your instructor on request.

### **TurnItIn**

Normally, students are required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.