

**PSYD15H3: Current Topics in Social Psychology**  
**Applied Behavioural Science**  
**Summer 2020**

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Virtual Office Hours: Friday 11am-12pm or by appointment

**Course Description**

Behavioural scientists have been studying the processes underlying judgment & decision-making for decades. For this long, we have known that people do not always behave as we would expect – in other words, we do not always behave “rationally”. We often make “irrational” decisions and evaluate our past, present and potential future experiences in unexpected ways. Interestingly, these irrationalities are not random. This course aims to provide students with an understanding of the subconscious, yet distinct and measurable patterns of these irrationalities. Critically, we will challenge assumptions about how human beings ought to act and about what constitutes “rational” behaviour as we understand it.

In recent years, many organizations in both the private and public sector have begun leveraging insights from behavioural science to “nudge” peoples’ behaviours in desired directions. This course aims to expand beyond the laboratory and draw from real-world field experiments and case studies, in addition to empirical work, to help students draw connections between scientific studies and real-life implications.

The general **goals and objectives** of the course are to help students:

- a. Learn and gain mastery over basic facts, research findings, terminology, principles, and theories important in the field of behavioural science.
- b. Practice and develop critical thinking skills, written and oral communications skills.
- c. Analyze current issues and controversies in the field of behavioural science.
- d. Make connections between theoretical concepts and implications for behavioural change in the real world.

Given the upper level format of this course, the main objective will be to expose you to new ideas, and to encourage you to develop and expand the way you think about and express your own ideas. In pursuit of these goals, a significant portion of your grade will come from participating in online discussions with your classmates, reflecting on how the concepts/theories we cover apply to your life/the real world, and how we can use the concepts from this course to design our own interventions for behavioural change.

**Textbook & Course Materials**

Thaler, R.H., & Sunstein, C.R. (2008). *Nudge: Improving decisions about health, wealth, and happiness*. New York: NY, Penguin Books.

- Additional readings for this class will be comprised of journal articles, blog posts, online videos etc. These will be posted on Quercus.

## Attendance

Because this is an online course, weekly attendance at a certain time is not required. However, there will be **select Friday mornings that will require your attendance** via Bb Collaborate. These are: **May 15<sup>th</sup>, July 3<sup>rd</sup>, August 7<sup>th</sup>, and whichever date your group is presentation is scheduled for (all Fridays at 9am).**

## Late Assignments

All weekly reflections are due at 9am each Friday. Late reflections will not be accepted. Late assignments will be accepted with a penalty of 10% for every 24 hrs that the assignment is late.

## Grade Breakdown

	<b>Weight</b>	<b>Due Date</b>	<b>Details</b>
<b>Group Presentation</b>	20%	Week of topic assigned, Friday at 9am ( <i>with the exception of week 2, which is due Monday, May 25 @ 9am</i> )	A recorded group presentation synthesizing that week's topic + posting of discussion questions and moderating week's discussion on forum.
<b>Weekly reflections</b>	10% (2% per reflection)	Fridays at 9am	Post reflection on weekly topic on the discussion forum for 5 out of the 7 weeks.
<b>Online discussion</b>	10%	Ongoing	Students will be responsible for responding to other students' posts & weekly discussion questions on an ongoing basis.
<b>Nudge challenge #1</b>	25%	First draft: June 24 @ 9am Final draft: <b>July 3 @ 9am</b> ( <i>attendance required</i> )	Students will work creatively in groups to respond to a nudge/behavioural intervention challenge.
<b>Nudge challenge #2</b>	25%	First draft: July 29 @ 9am Final draft: <b>Aug 7 @ 9am</b> ( <i>attendance required</i> )	See above.
<b>Feedback for peers' nudge challenges</b>	10% (5% x 2)	<u>Challenge 1:</u> June 26 @ 9am <u>Challenge 2:</u> July 31 @ 9am	Student groups will be responsible for providing feedback on other students' nudge challenge drafts via PeerScholar.

### Group Presentation:

- In groups of 3-4, you will cover one of the topics from this course (excluding the intro). Your task will be to read all the relevant material/watch videos etc and identify the key theme(s) that emerge.
- You will create a PowerPoint presentation, which you will present to me via Bb Collaborate. The recording of your presentation will be posted for your classmates to have access to.
- **Your presentation should answer the following questions:**
  - *What is the key theme or conclusion we can draw from this research?*
  - *Which assumptions about "rational" behaviour is this research is challenging?*
  - *What are the underlying psychological principles/cognitive biases that explain these findings?*
  - *What implications do these findings have for how we can think about changing behaviour?*

- You should also succinctly (using graphs/visuals) summarize a couple of studies that support the key message of your presentation in a compelling way. Always relate the study back to the main idea.
- **IMPORTANT:** the goal of this assignment is **not** to describe every experiment you read about (if I wanted to do that, I would re-read the articles).
  - **Discussion Questions**
    - **Your group will also be responsible for posting 4 thought-provoking discussion questions in the discussion forum and “moderating” this online discussion** based on the responses received from other students.
    - These questions are **not meant to be comprehension questions**, but rather questions that can start a critical dialogue.
    - **Examples are:** limitations of the research, ethical implications, replicability in other contexts, asking about personal examples or examples from real life etc.

### Weekly Reflections:

- On 7 select weeks, I will be posting a reflection assignment, which will reflect the topic covered for that week.
- **You will be responsible for responding to 5 out of 7 of these assignments** and posting your response on the discussion forum.
- Each reflection is worth 2% and will be graded mainly on completeness. **A well-thought-out reflection will receive the full 2% (one that combines theory/concepts to real life), and a mediocre reflection 1%. The response should be approximately 500 words.**

### Online Discussion:

- Throughout the course of the semester, students are expected to:
  - **Respond to weekly discussion questions posted by “presenting groups”**
  - **Respond to other students’ weekly reflections**
- The purpose of this is to facilitate dialogue among students and critical reflection on the course topics.
- **You are required to contribute at least 3 responses per week** (either to the same thread, or multiple threads).
- Responses will also be evaluated on quality and depth and **your ability to connect make connections between the readings/concepts and real life. If your goal is to earn the full 10%, ensure that you are putting effort into your responses.**

### Nudge Challenges:

- In groups of 5, you will be required to write an assignment for 2 Nudge Challenges. There will be several challenges to choose from.
- **The challenges will require you to think about how to “nudge” or change a specific behaviour based on concepts from the course and behavioural science more broadly** (e.g. how can we curb drunk driving? How can we help people recycle more? Etc).
- The assignment should be approximately **3-4 pages in length and should properly cite the relevant studies and concepts (at least 6) you drew on to support your nudge/behavioural intervention.**
- You will be graded on **creativity, practical feasibility, and theoretical relevance.**
- **All groups will pitch their challenges to the entire class via Bb Collaborate.** You should create **2 slides for the presentation. The pitches should be 5 mins.**
- The whole class will then vote anonymously for their favourite pitch. The winning group will get an extra 5% added to their Nudge Challenge grade.
  - **Peer Review**
    - Using PeerScholar, **you will both receive feedback from your fellow students, and will also be required to provide feedback to one group on the first draft of your assignment.**
    - **You will then use this feedback to edit/improve your assignment, explaining how you used this feedback.**
    - **10% of your grade (5% per nudge challenge) will come from the quality of feedback you provide to your peers.**

### Grade Breakdown for Nudge Challenges:

First draft	10%
Response to peer feedback	5%
Final draft	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>25%</b>

### Course Schedule

<b>May 15</b>	<b>Introduction: Thinking fast &amp; slow (attendance required @ 9am)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thaler, R.H., &amp; Sunstein, C.R. <i>Nudge: pages 1-83</i></li> <li>• <i>Intro to Behavioural Science Lecture Slides</i></li> </ul>
<b>May 25</b> (Note: this is a Monday)	<b>How context and framing skews decision-making</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How Anchoring, Ordering, Framing, and Loss Aversion Affect Decision Making: <a href="https://www.uxmatters.com/mt/archives/2011/03/how-anchoring-ordering-framing-and-loss-aversion-affect-decision-making.php">https://www.uxmatters.com/mt/archives/2011/03/how-anchoring-ordering-framing-and-loss-aversion-affect-decision-making.php</a></li> <li>• Furnham, A. &amp; Boo, H.C. A literature review of the anchoring effect.</li> <li>• Toll et al., (2007). Comparing gain and loss-framed messages for smoking cessation with sustained-release bupropion: A randomized controlled trial</li> </ul> <p><u>Supplementary material:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sara Garofolo: Loss Aversion: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V2EMuoM5IX4">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V2EMuoM5IX4</a></li> <li>• TED talk by Dan Gilbert – Why we make bad decisions</li> <li>• The decoy effect: <a href="https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20190801-the-trick-that-makes-you-overspend">https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20190801-the-trick-that-makes-you-overspend</a></li> </ul>
<b>May 29</b>	<b>Happiness &amp; perceptions of value</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schadke, D.A., &amp; Kahneman, D. (1998). Does living in California make people happy?</li> <li>• Ariely, D. Loewenstein, G., &amp; Drazen, P. (2006). Tom Sawyer &amp; the construction of value.</li> <li>• Gilbert, D.T., &amp; Ebert, J.E.J. (2002). Decisions and revisions: The affective forecasting of changeable outcomes</li> </ul> <p><u>Supplementary material:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The price of wine influences taste: <a href="https://www.gsb.stanford.edu/insights/baba-shiv-how-wines-price-tag-affect-its-taste">https://www.gsb.stanford.edu/insights/baba-shiv-how-wines-price-tag-affect-its-taste</a></li> <li>• TED talk by Dan Gilbert – The surprising science of happiness</li> </ul>
<b>June 5</b>	<b>Group work for Nudge Challenge #1</b>
<b>June 12</b>	<b>What we remember</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chajut, E., Caspi, A., Chen, R., Hod, M., &amp; Ariely, D. (2014). In pain thou shalt bring forth children: The peak-and-end rule in recall of labor pain.</li> <li>• Healy, A. &amp; Lenz, G. S. (2014). Substituting the end for the whole: Why voters respond primarily to the election-year economy.</li> <li>• Kahneman, D., Fredrickson, B. L., Schreiber, C. A., &amp; Redelmeier, D. A. (1993). When more pain is preferred to less: Adding a better end.</li> </ul> <p><u>Supplementary material:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TED talk by Daniel Kahneman – The Riddle of Experience vs. Memory</li> </ul>
<b>June 19</b>	<b>The psychology of defaults</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thaler, R.H., &amp; Sunstein, C.R. <i>Nudge: chapters 6, 10, 11</i></li> <li>• Johnson, E.J., &amp; Goldstein, D. (2003). Do defaults save lives?</li> <li>• Carroll et al., (2009). <i>Optimal defaults &amp; active decisions.</i></li> <li>• Patel, M.S., Day, S.C., Halpern, S.D. (2016). Generic medication prescription rates after health system-wide redesign of default options within the electronic health record.</li> </ul> <p><u>Supplementary material:</u></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Defaults are not the same by default: <a href="https://behavioralscientist.org/defaults-are-not-the-same-by-default/">https://behavioralscientist.org/defaults-are-not-the-same-by-default/</a></li> </ul>
<b>June 26</b>	<b>Reading Week</b>
<b>July 3</b>	<b>Nudge Challenge #1 Presentations (attendance required @ 9am)</b>
<b>July 10</b>	<b>Group work for Nudge Challenge #2</b>
<b>July 17</b>	<p><b>Present bias &amp; bounded self-control</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thaler, R.H., &amp; Sunstein, C.R. <i>Nudge: chapter 2</i></li> <li>DellaVigna, S., &amp; Malmendier, U. (2006). Paying not to go to the gym.</li> <li>Ariely, D., &amp; Wertenbroch, K. (2002). Procrastination, deadlines &amp; performance: Self-control by precommitment.</li> <li>Ariely, D., &amp; Loewenstein, G. (2006). The heat of the moment: The effect of sexual arousal on sexual decision making.</li> </ul> <p><u>Supplementary material:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Choiceology podcast – Season 2, episode 2: <a href="https://www.schwab.com/resource-center/insights/content/choiceology-season-2-episode-2">https://www.schwab.com/resource-center/insights/content/choiceology-season-2-episode-2</a></li> </ul>
<b>July 24</b>	<p><b>The puzzle of motivation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lepper, M. R., Greene, D., &amp; Nisbett, R. E. (1973). Undermining children's intrinsic interest with extrinsic reward: A test of the "overjustification" hypothesis.</li> <li>Ariely, D., Gneezy, U., Loewenstein, G., &amp; Mazar, N. (2008). Large stakes &amp; big mistakes</li> <li>Gneezy, U., &amp; Rustichini, A. (1988). A price is a fine.</li> </ul> <p><u>Supplementary material:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TED Talk – Daniel Pink – The puzzle of motivation</li> </ul>
<b>July 31</b>	<p><b>Irrational ethics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mazar, N., On., A., &amp; Ariely, D. (2008). The dishonesty of honest people: A theory of self-concept maintenance</li> <li>Cialdini et al., (2006). Managing social norms for persuasive impact.</li> <li>Rand, D.J., Green, J.D., &amp; Nowak, M.A. (2012). Spontaneous giving &amp; calculated greed.</li> </ul> <p><u>Supplementary material:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TED talk by Dan Ariely – Our Buggy Moral Code</li> </ul>
<b>Aug 7</b>	<b>Nudge Challenge #2 Presentations (attendance required @ 9am)</b>

**Tools for online collaboration/learning:**

<b>Tool</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
Bb Collaborate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All group presentations</li> <li>Collaborating with your group members for presentations, nudge challenges etc.</li> <li>Office hours</li> </ul>
Quercus Discussion Boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Posting your weekly reflections</li> <li>Posting discussion questions for “presenting groups”</li> <li>Responding to posts</li> </ul>
PeerScholar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing and receiving feedback on your nudge challenges</li> </ul>

## Missed Term Work due to Medical Illness or Other Emergency

All students citing a documented reason for missed term work must submit their request for accommodations **within three (3) business days** of the deadline for the missed work.

Students must submit **BOTH** of the following:

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

### Appropriate documentation:

For missed **TERM TESTS** due to **ILLNESS**:

- Submit the Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations form (<http://uoft.me/PSY-MTW>), along with an **original** copy of the official UTSC Verification of Illness Form ([uoft.me/UTSC-Verification-Of-Illness-Form](http://uoft.me/UTSC-Verification-Of-Illness-Form)) or an **original** copy of the record of visitation to a hospital emergency room. 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.
- Note: If an end date of "ongoing" is specified, the medical note will be assumed to cover a period of two weeks. If no end date / an "unknown" end date is specified, the note will be assumed to cover a period of three business days (starting from illness start date.)

For missed **TERM TESTS** due to **ACCESSABILITY REASONS**:

- Meet with your **AccessAbility consultant** and have them email Keely ([keely.hicks@utoronto.ca](mailto:keely.hicks@utoronto.ca)) detailing the accommodations required.

For missed **ASSIGNMENTS** due to **ILLNESS**:

- Submit the Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations form (<http://uoft.me/PSY-MTW>), along with a **hardcopy** of the Self-Declaration of Student Illness Form ([uoft.me/PSY-self-declare-form](http://uoft.me/PSY-self-declare-form)).

For missed **ASSIGNMENTS** due to **ACCESSABILITY REASONS**:

- If your desired accommodation is **within the scope** of your Accommodation Letter (ex. your letter includes "extensions of up to 7 days" and you need 3 days), submit the Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations form (<http://uoft.me/PSY-MTW>) and attach a copy of your letter. **Specify how many days extension you are requesting** on the request form.
- If your desired accommodation is **outside the scope** of your Accommodation Letter (ex. your letter includes "extensions of up to 7 days" but you need more time than that) you will need to meet with your **AccessAbility consultant** and have them email Keely ([keely.hicks@utoronto.ca](mailto:keely.hicks@utoronto.ca)) detailing the accommodations required.

For missed term tests or assignments in **OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES**:

Submit the Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations form (<http://uoft.me/PSY-MTW>), along with:

- In the case of a **death of a family member or friend**, please provide a copy of a death certificate.
- For U of T varsity-level or professional **athletic commitments**, an email from your coach or varsity administrator should be sent directly to Keely Hicks ([keely.hicks@utoronto.ca](mailto:keely.hicks@utoronto.ca)) **well in advance** of the missed work, detailing the dates and nature of the commitment.
- For **religious accommodations**, please email ([keely.hicks@utoronto.ca](mailto:keely.hicks@utoronto.ca)) **well in advance** of the missed work.
- For circumstances **outside of these guidelines**, please email Keely ([keely.hicks@utoronto.ca](mailto:keely.hicks@utoronto.ca)) on or before the date of the test / assignment deadline to describe your circumstances and ask what documentation would be appropriate

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

### Procedure:

Submit your (1.) request form and (2.) medical/self-declaration/other documents in person **WITHIN 3 BUSINESS DAYS** of the missed term test or assignment.

**Submit to:** Keely Hicks, Room SW420B, Monday – Friday, 9 AM – 4 PM. (Slide forms under door if out of office.)

After submitting your documentation, within approximately one to five business days, you will receive a response from your instructor detailing the accommodations to be made (if any).

**You are responsible for checking your official U of T email and Quercus course announcements daily, as accommodations may be time-critical.**

You should continue to work on your assignments to the best of your ability, as extension accommodations may be as short as one business day, depending on the nature of the illness/emergency.

If an accommodation has been granted but you are unable to meet the conditions of the accommodation (ex. you need a longer extension, or you missed a make-up test), you will need to repeat the missed term work procedure and submit additional forms to request further accommodation. Note that in the case of a missed make-up test, an opportunity to write a second make-up test may not be provided.

Completion of this form does NOT guarantee that accommodations will be made. The course instructor reserves the right to decide what accommodations (if any) will be made. Failure to adhere to any aspect of this policy may result in a denial of your request for accommodation.

### **Missed Accommodations**

If an accommodation is granted but a continued illness/emergency prevents you from meeting the requirements of your accommodation, you must repeat the missed term work procedure to request additional accommodations.

(E.g.) If you miss a make-up midterm, you would need to submit another Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations form. If your original medical note / documentation included the date of the make-up midterm, then only the Request form is required. If the date of the make-up midterm fell outside of the dates indicated on your original medical note/other documentation, then a new medical note/other appropriate documentation must also be submitted.

### **Importance of Three Business Day window:**

If you are unable to submit your documents in-person within the three business day window, **you must email Keely** ([keely.hicks@utoronto.ca](mailto:keely.hicks@utoronto.ca)) **within the three business day window** to explain when you will be able to bring your documents in person. Exceptions to the documentation deadline will only be made under **exceptional circumstances**. Attach scans of your documentation, and be prepared to bring your documents to Keely in-person as soon as you are well. Late documents may not be accepted.

### **NOTE: Assignments due at end of term**

Instructors cannot accept term work any later than five business days after the last day of class. Beyond this date, you would need to file a petition with the Registrar's Office (<https://www.utoronto.ca/registrar/term-work>).

### **NOTE: Final Exams**

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

### **AccessAbility Services**

AccessAbility Services at UT Scarborough is responsible for supporting students with disabilities. Once a student requests accommodation and provides appropriate documentation for their disabilities, staff in AccessAbility Services assess their needs and determine appropriate and reasonable accommodations,

consulting with faculty where appropriate. All information that AccessAbility Services collects from students about their disabilities is kept in strict confidence as prescribed by law.

As an instructor, you play a key role in accommodating students with disabilities. If you suspect that a student is having difficulties which may be caused by a disability, please encourage him/her to seek advice from AccessAbility Services. Once AccessAbility Services has determined appropriate accommodations for a student in your course, they will contact you. The two most common accommodations about which you might be contacted are the presence of note takers in your lectures, and the provision of alternate test and exam arrangements. Instructors are encouraged to consult with AccessAbility Services for advice and assistance in matters concerning students with disabilities. For more information on the mission and services offered by AccessAbility Services visit their website.

See Policy on Scheduling of Classes and Examinations and Other Accommodations for Religious Observances <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/religious.htm> as well as the February 2005 PDAD&C memo <http://www.provost.utoronto.ca/public/pdadc/0405/50.htm>.

See the "Statement of Commitment Regarding Persons with Disabilities"  
<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/disabled.htm>.

### **Academic Integrity University Policy:**

The responsibilities of all parties to the integrity of the teaching and learning relationship are defined in the University's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (August 1995)

<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>. Here is the preamble of the Code:

The concern of the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters is with the responsibilities of all parties to the integrity of the teaching and learning relationship. Honesty and fairness must inform this relationship, whose basis remains one of mutual respect for the aims of education and for those ethical principles which must characterize the pursuit and transmission of knowledge in the University.

The current Academic Integrity Officer is Janis Jones, room AA433, <mailto:janis@utsc.utoronto.ca>  
What distinguishes the University from other centres of research is the central place which the relationship between teaching and learning holds. It is by virtue of this relationship that the University fulfills an essential part of its traditional mandate from society, and, indeed, from history: to be an expression of, and by so doing to encourage, a habit of mind which is discriminating at the same time as it remains curious, which is at once equitable and audacious, valuing openness, honesty and courtesy before any private interests.

This mandate is more than a mere pious hope. It represents a condition necessary for free enquiry, which is the University's life blood. Its fulfillment depends upon the well being of that relationship whose parties define one another's roles as teacher and student, based upon differences in expertise, knowledge and experience, though bonded by respect, by a common passion for truth and by mutual responsibility to those principles and ideals that continue to characterize the University.

This Code is concerned, then, with the responsibilities of faculty members and students, not as they belong to administrative or professional or social groups, but as they co-operate in all phases of the teaching and learning relationship.

Such co-operation is threatened when teacher or student forsakes respect for the other--and for others involved in learning--in favour of self-interest, when truth becomes a hostage of expediency. On behalf of teacher and student and in fulfillment of its own principles and ideals, the University has a responsibility to ensure that academic achievement is not obscured or undermined by cheating or misrepresentation, that the evaluative process meets the highest standards of fairness and honesty, and that malevolent or even mischievous disruption is not allowed to threaten the educational process. These are areas in which teacher and student necessarily share a common interest as well as common responsibilities.