

PSYD15H3: Current Topics in Social Psychology
Applied Behavioural Science
Winter 2023

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Location: MW223

Office Hours: 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.

Late Assignments

All weekly reflections are due at 5pm each Tuesday. 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

	Weight	Due Date	Details
Group Presentation	20%	Week of topic assigned, Monday at 3pm	A recorded group presentation synthesizing that week's topic + posting of discussion questions and moderating week's discussion on forum.
Weekly reflections	10% (2% per reflection)	Tuesdays at 5pm	Post reflection on weekly topic on the discussion forum for 5 reflection topics.
Online discussion + class participation	10%	Ongoing	Students will be responsible for participating in class discussion and responding to other students' posts & weekly discussion questions on an ongoing basis.
Nudge challenge #1	25%	First draft: Feb 3 @ 3pm Final draft: Feb 13 @ 3pm	Students will work creatively in groups to respond to a nudge/ behavioural intervention challenge.
Nudge challenge #2	25%	First draft: March 24 @ 3pm Final draft: April 3 @ 3pm	See above.
Feedback for peers' nudge challenges	10% (5% x 2)	Challenge 1: Feb 8 @ 3pm Challenge 2: March 29 @ 3pm	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:
 1. Read all the relevant material/watch videos etc and identify the key theme(s) that emerge.
 2. Create a PowerPoint presentation, which you will present in class.
 3. Facilitate a class discussion on the week's topic.
- **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).
- Given the size of the groups, these roles in the presentation/facilitation should be broken down so that each group member shows that they were actively involved with their group and can demonstrate

mastery of the material. The discussion leaders will come into class prepared to lead and guide the discussion so that the discussion is fluid, lively, and interesting for all the students in the class. I encourage all leaders to be creative by incorporating class activities (e.g. breaking class into small groups to discuss different perspectives of the readings) and multimedia into their discussions. Though not required, familiarity with other relevant readings will help you develop “expertise” on your topic.

Weekly Reflections:

- On 5 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 these assignments** by 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 + Class Participation:

- Throughout the course of the semester, students are expected to:
 - **Respond to other students’ weekly reflections**
 - **Meaningfully participate in class discussions**
- 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 to online discussions** (either to the same thread, or multiple threads).
- **You are also required to contribute to class discussion in a way that demonstrates you have read the week’s material.**
- Participation 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/participation.**

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 on the specified dates. 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%
Total	25%

Course Schedule

Jan 9	<p>Introduction: Thinking fast & slow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thaler, R.H., & Sunstein, C.R. <i>Nudge: pages 1-83</i> • <i>Intro to Behavioural Science Lecture Slides</i>
Jan 16	<p>How context and framing skews decision-making</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How Anchoring, Ordering, Framing, and Loss Aversion Affect Decision Making: https://www.uxmatters.com/mt/archives/2011/03/how-anchoring-ordering-framing-and-loss-aversion-affect-decision-making.php • Furnham, A. & Boo, H.C. A literature review of the anchoring effect. • Toll et al., (2007). Comparing gain and loss-framed messages for smoking cessation with sustained-release bupropion: A randomized controlled trial <p><u>Supplementary material:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sara Garofolo: Loss Aversion: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V2EMuoM5IX4 • TED talk by Dan Gilbert – Why we make bad decisions • The decoy effect: https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20190801-the-trick-that-makes-you-overspend
Jan 23	<p>Happiness & perceptions of value</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schadke, D.A., & Kahneman, D. (1998). Does living in California make people happy? • Ariely, D. Loewenstein, G., & Drazen, P. (2006). Tom Sawyer & the construction of value. • Gilbert, D.T., & Ebert, J.E.J. (2002). Decisions and revisions: The affective forecasting of changeable outcomes <p><u>Supplementary material:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The price of wine influences taste: https://www.gsb.stanford.edu/insights/baba-shiv-how-wines-price-tag-affect-its-taste • TED talk by Dan Gilbert – The surprising science of happiness
Jan 30	<p>Group work for Nudge Challenge #1</p>
Feb 6	<p>What we remember</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chajut, E., Caspi, A., Chen, R., Hod, M., & Ariely, D. (2014). In pain thou shalt bring forth children: The peak-and-end rule in recall of labor pain. • Healy, A. & Lenz, G. S. (2014). Substituting the end for the whole: Why voters respond primarily to the election-year economy. • Kahneman, D., Fredrickson, B. L., Schreiber, C. A., & Redelmeier, D. A. (1993). When more pain is preferred to less: Adding a better end. <p><u>Supplementary material:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TED talk by Daniel Kahneman – The Riddle of Experience vs. Memory
Feb 13	<p>Nudge Challenge #1 Presentations</p>
Feb 20	<p>Reading Week</p>

Feb 27	<p>The psychology of defaults</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thaler, R.H., & Sunstein, C.R. <i>Nudge: chapters 6, 10, 11</i> • Johnson, E.J., & Goldstein, D. (2003). <i>Do defaults save lives?</i> • Carroll et al., (2009). <i>Optimal defaults & active decisions.</i> • 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. <p><u>Supplementary material:</u> Defaults are not the same by default: https://behavioralscientist.org/defaults-are-not-the-same-by-default/</p>
March 6	Group work for Nudge Challenge #2
March 13	<p>Present bias & bounded self-control</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thaler, R.H., & Sunstein, C.R. <i>Nudge: chapter 2</i> • DellaVigna, S., & Malmendier, U. (2006). Paying not to go to the gym. • Ariely, D., & Wertenbroch, K. (2002). Procrastination, deadlines & performance: Self-control by precommitment. • Ariely, D., & Loewenstein, G. (2006). The heat of the moment: The effect of sexual arousal on sexual decision making. <p><u>Supplementary material:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choiceology podcast – Season 2, episode 2: https://www.schwab.com/resource-center/insights/content/choiceology-season-2-episode-2
March 20	<p>The puzzle of motivation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lepper, M. R., Greene, D., & Nisbett, R. E. (1973). Undermining children's intrinsic interest with extrinsic reward: A test of the "overjustification" hypothesis. • Ariely, D., Gneezy, U., Loewenstein, G., & Mazar, N. (2008). Large stakes & big mistakes • Gneezy, U., & Rustichini, A. (1988). A price is a fine. <p><u>Supplementary material:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TED Talk – Daniel Pink – The puzzle of motivation
March 27	<p>Irrational ethics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mazar, N., On., A., & Ariely, D. (2008). The dishonesty of honest people: A theory of self-concept maintenance • Cialdini et al., (2006). Managing social norms for persuasive impact. • Rand, D.J., Green, J.D., & Nowak, M.A. (2012). Spontaneous giving & calculated greed. <p><u>Supplementary material:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TED talk by Dan Ariely – Our Buggy Moral Code
April 3	Nudge Challenge #2 Presentations

Tools for online collaboration/learning:

Tool	Purpose
Bb Collaborate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborating with your group members for presentations, nudge challenges etc. • Office hours

Quercus Discussion Boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posting your weekly reflections • Posting discussion questions for “presenting groups” • Responding to posts
PeerScholar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing and receiving feedback on your nudge challenges

General Information

University's Plagiarism Detection Tool

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University's plagiarism detection tool 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 tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation website (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>).

Quercus

This course uses the University's learning management system, Quercus, to post information about the course. This includes posting readings and other materials required to complete class activities and course assignments, as well as sharing important announcements and updates. The site is dynamic and new information and resources will be posted regularly as we move through the term, so please make it a habit to log in to the site on a regular, even daily, basis. To access the course website, go to the U of T Quercus log-in page at <https://q.utoronto.ca>. Once you have logged in to Quercus using your UTORid and password, you should see the link or "card" for **PSYD15**. You may need to scroll through other cards to find this. Click on the **PSYD15** link to open our course area, view the latest announcements and access your course resources. There are Quercus help guides for students that you can access by clicking on the "?" icon in the left side column.

SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT GRADES POSTED ONLINE: Please also note that any grades posted are for your information only, so you can view and track your progress through the course. No grades are considered official, including any posted in Quercus at any point in the term, until they have been formally approved and posted on ACORN at the end of the course. Please contact me as soon as possible if you think there is an error in any grade posted on Quercus.

Department of Psychology Missed Term Work Policy

For missed term work (assignments and term tests) due to illness, emergency, or other mitigating circumstances, please follow the procedures outlined below.

Note:

- The following reasons are not considered sufficient for missed term work: travel for leisure, weddings, personal commitments, work commitments, human error.
- [Missed Final Exams](#) are handled by the Registrar's Office and should be declared on eService.
- Instructors cannot accept term work any later than five business days after the last day of class. Beyond this date, accommodations are only possible via the Registrar's Office [petition process](#).

The email address to submit missed term work accommodation requests in **PSYD15** is:
rimma.teper@mail.utoronto.ca

ILLNESS OR EMERGENCY accommodations:

For missed work due to ILLNESS OR EMERGENCY, complete the following process:

1. Complete the [Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations Form](#).
2. Declare your absence on [ACORN](#) (Profile & Settings > Absence Declaration)
3. Email **both** of the following items to the course email **WITHIN 2 BUSINESS DAYS** of the missed work:
 - the [Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations Form](#)
AND
 - a screenshot of your Self-Declared Absence on ACORN

Note:

- *If you are unable to submit your request within 2 business days, you must still email your instructor within the 2 business day window to explain the nature of the delay. Exceptions to the 2 business day deadline will only be made under exceptional circumstances.*
- *If your absence is declared on ACORN, we do not require any additional supporting documentation (e.g. medical notes) to support your missed term work accommodation request.*

ACADEMIC CONFLICT accommodations:

For missed term work due to an ACADEMIC CONFLICT (e.g. two midterms at the same time):

1. Complete the [Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations Form](#).
2. Take screenshots of your course Quercus pages that demonstrate the conflict.
3. Email the form and screenshots to the course email **at least two weeks (10 business days) before the date of the activity**, or as soon as possible if it was not possible to identify the conflict earlier. Requests sent after the activity deadline may not be accommodated.

Note:

- *Multiple assignments due on the same day are not considered conflicts. Students are expected to manage their time effectively to meet assignment deadlines.*
- *Back-to-back tests/quizzes are not considered conflicts. Only overlapping activities are conflicts.*
- *Students are responsible for keeping their course timetables conflict-free. Students who register in two courses with overlapping lecture/tutorial/lab schedules will not be accommodated.*

RELIGIOUS CONFLICT accommodations:

For missed term work due to a RELIGIOUS CONFLICT:

1. Complete the [Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations Form](#).
2. Email the form to the course **email at least two weeks (10 business days) before the date of the activity**, or as soon as possible if it was not possible to identify the conflict earlier. Requests sent after the activity deadline may not be accommodated.

ACCESSABILITY SERVICES accommodations:

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

- **Contact your AccessAbility consultant** and have them email the course email detailing accommodations required.

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

- If your desired accommodation is **within the scope** of your Accommodation Letter (e.g. your letter includes “extensions of up to 7 days” and you need 3 days):

1. Complete the [Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations Form](#).
 2. Email the form ***AND*** your **Accommodation Letter** to the course email specifying how many days extension you are requesting.
- If your desired accommodation is **outside the scope** of your Accommodation Letter (e.g. your letter includes “extensions of up to 7 days” but you need more time than that):
 3. **Contact your AccessAbility consultant** and have them email the course email detailing the accommodations required.

Accommodation Procedure:

After submitting your documentation, you will receive a response from your instructor or TA. This form does not guarantee that you will be accommodated. 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. **You are responsible for checking your official U of T email and Quercus course announcements daily**, as accommodations may be time-critical.

For missed assignments, **do not wait for the instructor’s response to resume work on your assignment**. Extensions may be as short as one business day, depending on the nature of the illness/emergency. Complete your assignment as soon as you’re able, and email it to your instructor.

For an **anticipated absence** (e.g. a scheduled surgery or an illness with a prolonged recovery period), if you would like to request accommodations in advance, submit a [Verification of Illness Form](#) completed by your doctor AND the [Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations Form](#) to the course email. Absences can be declared up to 14 days into the future on ACORN.

Missed Accommodations

If an accommodation is granted but a continued illness/emergency prevents you from meeting its requirements, you must repeat the missed term work procedure to request additional accommodations. **Please make it clear in your subject line that you are requesting a second accommodation**. E.g. If you are given an extension but are still sick and need more time, or if you miss a make-up term test, you must submit *another* [Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations Form](#) and declare your extended absence on ACORN. *Note: In the case of a missed make-up test, an opportunity to write a second make-up test may not necessarily be provided.