

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

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Location: MW 264

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. Assignments will not be accepted more than a week after the last day of class.

Grade Breakdown

	Weight	Due Date	Details
Group Presentation	20%	Week of topic assigned, Monday at 3pm	A group presentation synthesizing that week's topic + moderating the class discussion through activities and discussion questions.
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' weekly reflections on an ongoing basis.
Nudge challenge #1	25%	<u>First draft:</u> Oct 16 @ 3pm <u>Final draft:</u> Nov 3 @ 3pm	Students will work creatively in groups to respond to a nudge/behavioural intervention challenge.
Nudge challenge #2	25%	<u>First draft:</u> Nov 13 @ 3pm <u>Final draft:</u> Dec 4 @ 3pm	See above.
Feedback for peers' nudge challenges	10% (5% x 2)	<u>Challenge 1:</u> Oct 20 @ 3pm <u>Challenge 2:</u> Nov 17 @ 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

Sept 11	<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>
Sept 18	<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><i>Supplementary material:</i></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
Sept 25	Group Work for Nudge Challenge #1
Oct 2	<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 <p>TED talk by Dan Gilbert – The surprising science of happiness</p>
Oct 9	Reading Week
Oct 16	<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> <p>TED talk by Daniel Kahneman – The Riddle of Experience vs. Memory</p>
Oct 23	<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></p> <p>Defaults are not the same by default: https://behavioralscientist.org/defaults-are-not-the-same-by-default/</p>
Oct 30	Nudge Challenge #1 Presentations
Nov 6	Group Work for Nudge Challenge #2
Nov 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> <p>Choiceology podcast – Season 2, episode 2: https://www.schwab.com/resource-center/insights/content/choiceology-season-2-episode-2</p>
Nov 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> <p>TED Talk – Daniel Pink – The puzzle of motivation</p>
Nov 27	Nudge Challenge #2 Presentations
Dec 4	Irrational ethics

	<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> TED talk by Dan Ariely – Our Buggy Moral Code</p>
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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 procedure outlined below.

Procedure:

1. Complete the [Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations Form](#) ("MTW Form").
2. Email **BOTH** your MTW Form and Supporting Documentation to **<course email>** according to the instructions specified below.

Supporting Documentation Requirements and Deadlines:

Reason for Missed Work	Documentation required for a first absence in the term	Documentation required for subsequent absences in the term	Deadline for submitting MTW form and supporting documentation
Illness or Injury	ACORN Absence Declaration	UofT Verification of Illness Form	<u>WITHIN 2 BUSINESS DAYS</u> of the missed work
Bereavement	ACORN Absence Declaration	A death certificate or funeral announcement	<u>WITHIN 2 BUSINESS DAYS</u> of the missed work
University-sponsored athletic or artistic obligation at the varsity/provincial/national level	ACORN Absence Declaration	A note from a university staff member (advisor, coach, residence staff, etc.) who can substantiate the obligation, sent directly to the course email	<u>10 BUSINESS DAYS IN ADVANCE</u> of the missed deadline
Disability-related reasons for students registered with AccessAbility Services	For missed TERM TESTS , - Contact your AccessAbility consultant and have them write to the course email detailing the accommodations needed. For missed ASSIGNMENTS , - 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), send your Accommodation Letter to		<u>PREFERABLY IN ADVANCE OF THE MISSED WORK, OR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE</u>

	<p>the course email and specify how many days extension you are requesting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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), contact your AccessAbility consultant and have them write to the course email detailing the accommodations needed. 	
Academic Conflict (e.g. two midterms at the same time)	Screenshot from Quercus demonstrating the conflict.	<u>10 BUSINESS DAYS IN ADVANCE</u> of the missed work
Religious Conflict	None required	

Notes:

- The following reasons are not considered sufficient for missed term work: social activities, recreational travel, technological issues, avoidance of assessments or deadlines, work commitments
- [Missed Final Exams](#) are handled by the Registrar’s Office and should be declared on eService.
- For ACORN absence declarations, the date you declare the absence is required to fall within the seven-day declaration period (i.e.) the absence cannot be submitted proactively or retroactively.
- 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](#).
- If you are unable to submit your request within the specified number of business days, you must still email your instructor within that window to explain the nature of the delay. Exceptions to the deadlines are made only under exceptional circumstances.
- Multiple assignments due on the same day are not considered academic conflicts. Students are expected to manage their time effectively to meet assignment deadlines.
- Back-to-back tests/quizzes are not considered academic 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.

Next Steps:

After submitting your documentation, you will receive a response from your instructor or TA. The course instructor reserves the right to decide what accommodations 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.

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.

Examples: If you were granted an extension for a paper but are still unable to meet the new deadline, or if you miss a make-up term test, you must submit *another* MTW form and supply documentation according to the “subsequent absences” column in the chart above. *Note: In the case of a missed make-up test, an opportunity to write a second make-up test may not necessarily be provided.