

**PSYD15H3: Current Topics in Social Psychology**  
**Applied Behavioural Science**  
**Winter 2024**

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Location: HL B110

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.

**Course Materials**

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

### Grade Breakdown

	<b>Weight</b>	<b>Due Date</b>	<b>Details</b>
<b>Group Presentation</b>	15%	Week of topic assigned, Friday at 11am	A group presentation synthesizing that week's topic + moderating the class discussion through activities and discussion questions.
<b>Weekly quizzes</b>	10%	Each week of assigned readings, Friday at 11am (except intro lecture)	3 multiple choice questions to be completed at the start of class to assess comprehension of key concepts
<b>Weekly reflections</b>	15% (3% per reflection)	Fridays at 5pm	Post reflection on weekly topic on the discussion forum for 5 reflection topics.
<b>Online discussion + class participation</b>	10%	Ongoing	Students will be responsible for participating in class discussion and responding to other students' weekly reflections on an ongoing basis.
<b>Nudge challenge #1</b>	25%	<u>First draft:</u> Oct 10 @ 3pm <u>Feedback to other group:</u> Oct 13 @ 3pm <u>Presentation:</u> Oct 18 in class <u>Final draft:</u> Oct 25 @ 3pm	Students will work creatively in groups to respond to a nudge/behavioural intervention challenge.  Student groups will also be responsible for providing feedback on other students' nudge challenge drafts via PeerScholar.
<b>Nudge challenge #2</b>	25%	<u>First draft:</u> Nov 15 @ 3pm <u>Feedback to other group:</u> Nov 18 @ 3pm <u>Presentation:</u> Nov 22 in class <u>Final draft:</u> Nov 29 @ 3pm	See above.

#### 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 Quiz:**

- On each week there are readings assigned (with the exception of the 1<sup>st</sup> class), **students will be required to answer 3 multiple choice questions online to assess for comprehension of key concepts for the week.**
- The purpose of the quizzes is to ensure students complete the required readings, and can therefore meaningfully participate in class discussion.
- The format of the quiz will be "open-book" and students will be given 10 minutes.
- **The aggregate score of all 7 quizzes will total to 10% of your final grade.**

### **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 3%. **A well-thought-out reflection will receive the full 3% (one that combines theory/concepts to real life), and a mediocre reflection 2%, and a reflection with little/no connections to behavioural science concepts or theories will receive 1% or lower. The response should be approximately 500 words (not including references).**

### **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 **6-8 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.**
- **5% of your grade (2.5% per nudge challenge) will come from the quality of feedback you provide to your peers.**

**Grade Breakdown for Nudge Challenges:**

First draft	10%
Given feedback	2.5%
Response to received feedback	2.5%
Final draft	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>25%</b>

## Course Schedule

<b>Sept 6</b>	<b>Introduction: Thinking fast &amp; slow</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Intro to Behavioural Science Lecture Slides</i></li> </ul>
<b>Sept 13</b>	<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 <i>Supplementary material:</i></li> <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>Sept 20</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 <i>Supplementary material:</i></li> <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> TED talk by Dan Gilbert – The surprising science of happiness</li> </ul>
<b>Sept 27</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. <i>Supplementary material:</i> TED talk by Daniel Kahneman – The Riddle of Experience vs. Memory</li> </ul>
<b>Oct 4</b>	<b>Group Work for Nudge Challenge #1</b>
<b>Oct 11</b>	<b>The psychology of defaults</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Johnson, E.J., &amp; Goldstein, D. (2003). Do defaults save lives?</li> <li>Carroll et al., (2009). Optimal defaults &amp; active decisions.</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. <i>Supplementary material:</i> 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>Oct 18</b>	<b>Nudge Challenge #1 Presentations</b>
<b>Oct 25</b>	<b>Group Work for Nudge Challenge #2</b>
<b>Nov 1</b>	<b>Reading Week (no class)</b>

<b>Nov 8</b>	<p><b>Present bias &amp; bounded self-control</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DellaVigna, S., &amp; Malmendier, U. (2006). Paying not to go to the gym.</li> <li>• Sayette, M. A., Loewenstein, G., Griffin, K. M., &amp; Black, J. J. (2008). Exploring the cold-to-hot empathy gap in smokers.</li> <li>• Hershfield, H. E., Goldstein, D. G., Sharpe, W. F., Fox, J., Yeykelvis, L., Carstensen, L. L., &amp; Bailenson, J. (2011). Increasing saving behavior through age-progressed renderings of the future self.</li> </ul> <p><u>Supplementary material:</u> 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></p>
<b>Nov 15</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>• Gneezy, U., Meier, S. &amp; Rey-Biel, P. (2011). When and why incentives (don't) work to modify behavior.</li> <li>• Gneezy, U., &amp; Rustichini, A. (1988). A price is a fine.</li> </ul> <p><u>Supplementary material:</u> TED Talk – Daniel Pink – The puzzle of motivation</p>
<b>Nov 22</b>	<p><b>Nudge Challenge # 2 Presentations</b></p>
<b>Nov 29</b>	<p><b>Irrational ethics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kraft-Todd, G.T., Yoeli, E., Bhanot, S., &amp; Rand, D.J., (2015). Promoting cooperation in the field.</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> TED talk by Erez Yoeli – How to motivate people to do good for others</p>

**Tools for online collaboration/learning:**

<b>Tool</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
Quercus Discussion Boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Posting your weekly reflections</li> <li>• Responding to reflections/posts and participating in discussion</li> </ul>
PeerScholar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing and receiving feedback on your nudge challenges</li> </ul>

## General Information

### USE OF GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TOOLS

Students may use artificial intelligence tools, including generative AI, in this course as learning aids or to help produce assignments. However, students are ultimately accountable for the work they submit.

Students may not use artificial intelligence tools for taking tests, writing research papers, creating computer code, or completing major course assignments. However, these tools may be useful when gathering information from across sources and assimilating it for understanding.

The knowing use of generative artificial intelligence tools, including ChatGPT and other AI writing and coding assistants, for the completion of, or to support the completion of, an examination, term test, assignment, or any other form of academic assessment, may be considered an academic offense in this course.

### 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.

## MISSED TERM WORK POLICY

Using the Missed Term Work policy below is **optional**. You may prefer to develop your own system (ex. you could create your own online form instead of using our MTW form), but you must account for the following:

- Instructors are not obliged to accept late work, **except where there are legitimate, documented reasons beyond a student's control**. In such cases, **a late penalty is normally not appropriate**. (as per the [Academic Handbook](#), 6.6)
- If you intend to accept and apply penalties for late submissions, you must state this clearly in your course syllabus/outline.
- Students who miss a term test for an acceptable reason (e.g. illness or bereavement) **should be offered a make-up test**. For some courses it may be appropriate to allocate the value of the missed test to another test, or other piece(s) of term work, but this is **strongly discouraged** (as per the [Academic Handbook](#), 7.3)
- For a **first absence** in a course, students may simply **declare their absence on ACORN**. They can declare absence only once per term, for a period of up to 7 days. ACORN absence declarations should be considered sufficient documentation for missed work.
- If a student is **away more than once** in the term, they cannot declare additional absences on ACORN. In these cases, you have the **option to request proof** of their second+ absence, for example:
  - o A University approved Verification of Illness (VOI) form
  - o A death certificate, funeral announcement, or other supporting document for bereavement
  - o A note from a university staff member (advisor, coach, residence staff, etc.) who can substantiate the student's claims, sent directly to the instructor by email

### 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 [rimma.teper@mail.utoronto.ca](mailto:rimma.teper@mail.utoronto.ca) according to the instructions specified below.

#### Supporting Documentation Requirements and Deadlines:

Reason for Missed Work	Documentation required for a <b>first absence</b> in the term	Documentation required for <b>subsequent absences</b> in the term	Deadline for submitting MTW form and supporting documentation
Illness or Injury	<a href="#">ACORN</a> Absence Declaration	<a href="#">UofT Verification of Illness Form</a>	<b>WITHIN 2 BUSINESS DAYS</b> of the missed work
Bereavement	<a href="#">ACORN</a> Absence Declaration	A death certificate or funeral announcement	<b>WITHIN 2 BUSINESS DAYS</b> of the missed work



University-sponsored athletic or artistic obligation at the varsity/provincial/national level	<a href="#">ACORN</a> 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	<b><u>10 BUSINESS DAYS IN ADVANCE</u></b> of the missed deadline
Disability-related reasons for students registered with AccessAbility Services	<p>For missed <b>TERM TESTS</b>,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Contact your AccessAbility consultant</b> and have them write to the course email detailing the accommodations needed.</li> </ul> <p>For missed <b>ASSIGNMENTS</b>,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- If your desired accommodation is <b>within the scope</b> of your Accommodation Letter (e.g. your letter includes “extensions of up to 7 days” and you need 3 days), send your <b>Accommodation Letter</b> to the course email and specify how many days extension you are requesting.</li> <li>- If your desired accommodation is <b>outside the scope</b> of your Accommodation Letter (e.g. your letter includes “extensions of up to 7 days” but you need more time than that), <b>contact your AccessAbility consultant</b> and have them write to the course email detailing the accommodations needed.</li> </ul>		<b><u>PREFERABLY IN ADVANCE OF THE MISSED WORK, OR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE</u></b>
Academic Conflict (e.g. two midterms at the same time)	Screenshot from Quercus demonstrating the conflict.		<b><u>10 BUSINESS DAYS IN ADVANCE</u></b> 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.