

PSYC W2235
THINKING AND DECISION MAKING
Fall 2009

TR 10:35-11:50 A.M.
SCHERMERHORN 614

Instructor

Prof. David H. Krantz
Office Address: 419 Schermerhorn
Telephone Number: 4-4534 or 4-3074
E-mail: dhk@columbia.edu

Teaching Assistants:

Brian Maniscalco (TA)
E-mail: bsm2105@columbia.edu
Office Hours: Wednesdays & Thursdays, 12:30pm - 1:30pm @ 312
Schermerhorn Hall (in the office all the way to the right)

Iman Hassan (TA)
E-mail: ifh2104@columbia.edu
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 9am - 10am @ 318c Schermerhorn Hall

Method of Instruction: Lectures and class discussion. A detailed schedule is shown below. It includes tentative exam and paper due dates.

Method of Evaluation: There will be three exams, including the final exam. They will cover respectively the first, second, and final 1/3 of the course, so the final is not a true comprehensive final; the exams are cumulative only in that later lectures draw on material in earlier ones. Each exam is worth about 25% of the grade.

Two papers are required, with due dates in the 4th and 8th week of classes. A third paper can be submitted as a makeup if one of the first two papers is less than satisfactory. Each paper is worth about 12.5% of the grade. Expectations for these papers and some suggestions for topics will be posted in the Assignments part of Courseworks.

A term paper (probing some topic more deeply) is optional: it can substitute for the final exam.

Contribution to class discussion is also a factor that can lead to a higher or lower final grade.

Lectures and Important Dates

Psyc 2235, Fall 2009

Sep08 overview

Sep10 optimization: physical standards

Sep15 optimization: subjective standards

Sep17 optimization: social standards

Sep22 no optimum: Condorcet-Arrow cycles

Sep24 no optimum: context reversals and cycles

Sep29 downweighting value: effect of uncertainty; **PAPER #1**

Oct01 downweighting value: effect of delay

Oct06 review

Oct08 **EXAM #1** (material through Sep24)

Oct13 affect in thinking and decision

Oct15 cognitive processes in thinking and decision

Oct20 Kahneman & Tversky: natural heuristics

Oct22 using and neglecting probabilities

Oct27 cognitive architecture for "good" decisions; **PAPER #2**

Oct29 affiliation and social goals

Nov03 **ELECTION DAY HOLIDAY**

Nov05 coordination and cooperation; **OPTIONAL TERM PAPER OUTLINE**

Nov10 review

Nov12 **EXAM #2** (Sep29 through Oct27)

Nov17 cooperation; environmental goals

Nov19 social issues #1: The death penalty

Nov24 decisions by groups

Nov26 **THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY**

Dec01 social choice: Arrow's Theorem and beyond

Dec03 individual and situational differences

Dec08 social issues #2: national security

Dec10 last lecture: recap and review

Dec14 Last day for Term Paper drafts

Dec21 **OPTIONAL TERM PAPER final due date**

Dec22 **EXAM #3** (Oct29 through Dec08)

Readings

There is no assigned text. Reading assignments will be posted on CourseWorks. For those who are looking for helpful books that cover aspects of the material in this course, the list below has three good ones. The one by Plous is least thorough, but what is covered is done well. The others are somewhat more complete and also very good.

Thinking and Deciding
by Jonathan **Baron**

Rational Choice in An Uncertain World: The Psychology of Judgment and Decision Making
by Reid **Hastie** & Robyn **Dawes**

The Psychology of Judgment and Decision Making
by Scott **Plous**

Writing Requirement

The writing requirement for Psyc 2235 consists of two papers, with tentative due dates September 29 and October 27, 2009.

The purpose of this requirement is to increase your awareness of science literature and to develop your skill in expository science-based writing.

A paper can be on any topic related to thinking and/or decision making, whether or not the topic is included in our syllabus. I will suggest a few topics (in a later posting) and will be glad to respond to ideas that are sent to me by e-mail. What follows are a few basic guidelines.

The LENGTH should be whatever is necessary to explain your main points coherently. Two pages is probably too short to accomplish much; but I'm not eager to read 50 pages, nor should anything like that length be needed.

The paper should be SCIENCE-BASED. Specifically, you should find, read, and summarize at least ONE article from a science journal that relates directly to your topic and that was published in 2006-2009. If you like, you can start by looking at a plausible journal, finding an interesting article, and designing your paper topic around that article. There are hundreds of plausible journals. Here are a few journal titles, in no particular order:

Law and Human Behavior

Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes

Journal of Experimental Psychology: General

Journal of Risk and Uncertainty

Management Science

Journal of Consumer Behavior

Review of Environmental Economics and Policy.

This is just a sample; there are many others.

If you find an earlier article (prior to 2006) that interests you, by all means focus on it as your main source. Nonetheless, you should find some related followup with a publication

data of 2006 or later and include a summary.

Your paper can focus mostly on one or more journal articles, in either expository or critical mode, or it can focus on applications of the findings, either to individual behavior (including your own or friends' behavior) or to group behavior or to public policy.

If your first paper is not very good, you will be given a chance to rewrite it or to substitute a different paper for it. This is part of the program to develop skill. The same applies to the second paper, but I have never seen a student write one good paper and then fail badly on later attempts (for papers of this nature).

After writing and receiving comments on your first paper, you may decide to substitute a third paper (term paper) for the final exam. Term paper topics should be somewhat more ambitious than what I have indicated above for the two required papers