

# Columbia University

## PSYCH 2235 Thinking and Decision Making

**Meeting Time:** Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:35-11:50 am      **Fall 2004**  
**Room:** 501 Schermerhorn

***Instructor:***

Elke Weber

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***Teaching Assistants:***

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TBA

**Office Hours: Time TBA, 356 Schermerhorn**  
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## Course Requirements and Grading

***Textbook and Other Readings:***

Plous, S. (1993). *The Psychology of Judgment and Decision Making*. McGraw Hill (available at the University Bookstore)

Selected articles and book chapters (on reserve in Psychology Library)

***Grades:***

Your course grade will be based on a midterm exam (Oct. 19; 20% each), a final exam (35%), a term paper (33%), and a decision diary (12%).

***Decision Diary:***

In the first week of the course, I will introduce you to a range of qualitatively different ways in which people have been found to make decisions. From then on and throughout the course, I want you to become more aware of *how* you make decisions and how those decisions turn out. To encourage you to pay attention to your own decision making, I will ask you to reflect in writing on three (relatively) major decisions during the course of the semester. Each analysis will be relatively short (1 page).

### ***Term Paper:***

Your term paper can take one of two forms. It can be a critical analysis that looks at some aspect of thinking and decision making that you find interesting. Alternatively, it can be a proposal for an empirical study that would test some implications of a particular theory in this area. This option would be most appropriate for students interested in conducting psychological research and who have already completed an experimental laboratory course in Psychology. While the length of the paper will vary depending on the topic, the papers are expected to be about 7-9 pages in length.

The preparation of the term paper will involve two steps. (1) You prepare an outline of the paper that will need to be approved by the TA responsible for term papers (Eric Schoenberg). The outline should include a list of at least three sources (other than the course textbook) that are related to your topic. (2) After you have an approved outline, you need to write the term paper itself. You have the option of turning in *drafts* of the outline and term paper. These will be returned in a timely manner with feedback to help you in the preparation of the final product. The outline will be graded on a pass/fail basis and will be worth 1/5 of the term paper grade. The paper itself will make up the rest of the term paper grade. The deadlines for term paper submission are as follows:

Oct. 14:	Draft of outline (optional)
Oct. 28:	Final outline, including a list of three references
Nov. 23:	Draft of term paper (optional)
December 9:	Final term paper

\*\*Note: These dates are *firm* and points will be taken off for lateness on both the outline and the term paper.

## **Course Topics and Reading Assignments**

### **Week 1:**

#### **Introduction and Course Overview**

Plous, Chs. 1-4

Baron, J. (2000), *Thinking and Decision Making*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, Ch. 3: "Good thinking: The nature of rationality"

### **Weeks 2-4:**

#### **Normative Theories of Judgment and Choice**

Plous, Chs. 7-8

Baron, Ch 10: "Normative theory of choice"

## **Weeks 5-6:**

### **Descriptive Theories of Judgment and Choice**

Plous, Chs. 9-15

Baron, parts of Ch. 15: "Quantitative judgment"

## **Weeks 7-8:**

### **The Social Side of Judgment and Decision Making**

Plous, Chs. 16-20

## **Weeks 9-11:**

### **Preference Elicitation**

Plous, Chs. 5-6

Tversky, A., & Kahneman, D. (1981). The framing of decisions and the psychology of choice. *Science*, 211, 453-458.

Thaler, R. (1992). Preference reversals. Chapter 7 in *The Winner's Curse: Paradoxes and Anomalies of Economic Life*. New York: Free Press.

McNeil, B. J., Pauker, S. G., Sox, H. C., & Tversky, A. (1982). On the elicitation of preferences for alternative therapies. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 306, 1259-1262.

## **Weeks 12-14:**

### **Social Dilemmas and Games**

McMillan, J. (1992). *Games, Strategies, and Managers*. New York: Oxford University Press, Chs. 1-3

Baron, Ch. 18: "Social Dilemmas"

Plous, Ch. 21

Dawes, R. M. & Thaler, R. H. (1988). Anomalies: Cooperation. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 2, 187-197.

Hardin, G. R. (1968). The tragedy of the commons. *Science*, 162, 1243-1248.