COURSE DESCRIPTION

Decisions are the foundation of life and society. How do we understand the world around us, solve difficult problems, and make important decisions? How do scientists study human reasoning and decision making? What can we learn about major problems in the world by studying the way people reason and make decisions? In this course, students will learn the major theories and psychological principles of human reasoning and decision making. We will explore several important domains, including decisions in everyday life, politics, economy, medicine/clinical, sports, expertise, and sustainability. We will apply this knowledge to real-world events and your personal life.

Prerequisites: PSYC 201 (Intro Psychology)

- This course counts towards the Psychology Major or Psychology Minor.

FORMAT

The design of this course is collaborative, exploratory learning. Class time will be used for break-out groups, discussion, and critical thinking and problem-solving activities.

1. **Readings.** We will read and discuss interesting articles on reasoning and decision making. Your reading assignment will be tracked in Perusall. Bring your ideas to class!

2. **Break-out Groups.** Each day we will meet to explore and discuss topics related to reasoning and human behavior. The typical class period will include about 30 minutes working in break-out groups or discussing world events.

3. **Class Discussion & Lecture.** Break-out groups will be followed by about 30 minutes of class discussion and supplemental lecture, with additional time (e.g., 15 minutes) for other activities, such as preparation for future assignments.
STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course is designed to develop your skills in three broad areas, in order to help you master important concepts and become a more informed and responsible citizen.

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to do:

I. Decision Science
   1. Explain different definitions of “reasoning” and “decision making.”
   2. Describe major principles of reasoning and decision making.
   3. Use these principles to analyze real-world events and problems in society.

II. Interdisciplinary Scholarship and Collaboration:
   1. Practice your interdisciplinary communication, collaboration, and research skills. Use multiple perspectives to analyze behavior.
   2. Become familiar with decision science research and practice from multiple disciplines. Critique their methods, to develop better informed solutions.

III. Leadership and Service:
   1. Practice leadership in your own education.
   2. Work with members of the community to address a sustainability problem.
   3. Improve your written and oral communication skills.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Whether or not you achieve these learning objectives fundamentally depends on your engagement and participation in the course.

I think highly of students and their potential. I expect you to take an active role in our class discussions, complete the assigned readings to the best of your ability, and regularly share your ideas. Please improve the course by showing respect for your classmates; being prepared, on time, and ready to work when class is in session.
COURSE STRUCTURE

BREAK-OUT GROUPS
For most in-class activities, you will be assigned to a group of about 5 students. These groups will be used for Break-out Discussion of course topics, in smaller groups, to facilitate more engaging and productive critical thinking and discussion.

CLASS DISCUSSION
Class Discussion may take on different forms, depending on the goals for that day. However, most of the time, the Instructor will give your group some Discussion Questions to consider and work through as a group, before discussing with the entire class.

- **Group Representative.** One person will serve as the representative for the group, helping to bring up the Discussion Questions and keep discussion moving forward.
- **Recorder.** One person will write down the group’s chosen responses to the Discussion Questions, and both the Representative and Recorder should be ready to lead the discussion of their group’s effort, once we return to the class as whole.

  *Students will take turns being the representative and recorder.*

**Assignment:** Your group Representative or Recorder for the day must turn in the handwritten notes of the group at the end of class, as an in-class participation assignment.

- Your name and signature must be on the notes to receive credit.

READING ASSIGNMENTS
There will be reading assignments for each class period, featuring important course topics. Come prepared to discuss the readings during class.

There will also be a Perusall assignment, associated with the readings. Persusall is an online reading portal where students read and comment on the assigned readings. Perusall helps students think more critically about the readings, share ideas with classmates, and learn from each other. This assignment also helps students keep up with the course readings, while creating a more engaging learning environment. You must complete the Perusall assignment before the day the readings are discussed, for full credit.

See the Reading Schedule and Perusall section (and handout) for more details.

REASONING AND DECISION MAKING IN EVERYDAY LIFE
As a running assignment for the semester, you will be asked to explore various events in your life and broader society in terms of principles learned in class. You will also develop a framework, or overall theory, that describes how you think people reason and make decisions in different situations.

EXAMS
Your mastery of course topics and their application to real-world events will be tested in three Exams.
I. READINGS (PERUSALL) (15%)

Readings are posted in Perusall as PDFs. Please follow the assigned Reading Schedule, and read the assigned readings before we discuss them in class.

Perusall  *To log in to Perusall, you must enter the Instructor's course code!

Each reading comes with a Perusall reading assignment. Perusall is an online reading portal that encourages you to make thoughtful observations about the readings and share ideas with your classmates. Perusall also makes grading easier, by keeping track of your comments and their quality. I am using Perusall because the readings are very important to course: we will discuss the readings in class every day and do in-class activities based on the readings.

Grading:

You will be asked to make a certain number of high quality comments on each reading. Your comments will be graded based on:

a) Comprehensiveness. Comment on all the readings, and cover sections well.

b) Quality. It should be clear that you are actively thinking about the readings and important concepts, at a deep level. Examples: 1) Apply new concepts to people’s behavior or specific problems in society, 2) Compare and contrast different concepts or theories (e.g., reconcile competing viewpoints, combine ideas), 3) Relate new ideas to lessons learned earlier, or in other courses.

c) Responsiveness. Share your ideas with other students and engage them. Respond to their questions, if you think you have a useful idea.

*See Blackboard Guides for More Information:

- How Perusall Works
- Getting Started
II. PARTICIPATION (30%)

This is a discussion course, which means that learning primarily occurs through your independent reading and active engagement during class. Everyone’s voice is crucial. Thus, how well you learn in this class will depend on how well you and the other students contribute. This goal will be reflected in a participation grade.

Participation also includes engaging in any hands-on learning activities we do in the class, and bringing your Reasoning and Decision Making in Everyday Life assignments, and other assignments, to class for discussion.

**Group Discussion (25%)**

- Points Possible: 25 Days of Discussion (1% each) = 25%

Participation includes doing a good job actively engaging in your break-out group’s discussion, and then contributing to the broader class discussion in a meaningful way (e.g., insightful comments and generally helping share questions and ideas).

In a typical day, your group will discuss key ideas from the readings and real-world events, and produce written responses to discussion questions posed by the instructor. Your grade for the day will come from these handwritten notes (written by the group’s Recorder).

*Your handwritten name and signature must be on the notes to receive credit.*

**Group Representative (5%)**

- Points Possible: 1 Day = 5%

You will be asked to be a facilitator (Representative) for your break-out group at least once this semester. Your grade will be determined by your group’s overall productivity on its hand-written notes and broader participation in class discussion. Generally speaking, if you do your best to keep the group on track and discussing the day’s assignment effectively, then you will receive full credit.

*With large class sizes, your group may have more than 1 representative.*

**Grading:**

The handwritten notes for that day’s discussion will be the basis for your daily participation grade, and that day’s Representative(s):

If your group demonstrates a sincere effort to address all aspects of the assignment, then you will typically earn full points. Possible points will be assigned on a graduated scale (percentage satisfaction): 0%, 25%, 50%, 75%, 100%.
III. REASONING AND DECISION MAKING IN EVERYDAY LIFE ACTIVITIES (10%)

- 5 Activities (2% each) = 10%

To help you learn key concepts and think about the psychological processes involved in reasoning and decision making in life and society, you will complete 5 Reasoning and Decision Making in Everyday Life Activities.

Generally, you will be asked to think about how new principles learned in class relate to real-world events in your life and broader society. Sometimes, you will also be asked to develop a framework, or theoretical description, of how you think people reason and make decisions in different kinds of situations. These overall frameworks of reasoning and decision making will be updated as we learn new lessons.

Due: Usually, the beginning of class on the next class period, after we have discussed the topic for that module (see Course Schedule).

*A Grading Rubric for this assignment will be posted in Assignments folder on Blackboard.

IV. EXAMS (45%)

Points Possible: 3 Exams (15% each) = 45%

- Exam 1. Cognition, Reasoning, and Problem Solving
- Exam 2. Decision Science (Rational Choice Theory and Bounded Rationality)

Format: Exams will be designed to test your mastery of key concepts, and ability to apply these concepts to real-world situations. The format will be multiple choice and essay.

ACADEMIC POLICIES

Final Grades

Final grades will be based on a 100-point (100%) system:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>98-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-97</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>88-89</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-87</td>
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<td>B-</td>
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<td>C-</td>
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<td>D+</td>
<td>68-69</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>63-67</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Missed Participation Credit

A large portion of your grade in this class comes from participation in the break-out groups and class discussion, and other in-class activity sessions. There are 25 Participation Days in this course. You can miss 1 Participation Day, without being penalized. For any absences beyond 1 Day, you will need proper documentation and a make-up assignment to receive full credit for the absence (see Guidelines in next section).
Missed Exams, Presentations, and Project Activities

If you will be absent for class or unable to complete a major assignment on time, then you may receive full credit (i.e., not be penalized), if:

Guidelines for Excused Absences, Late Work, Missed Assignments:

1. You are ill, or a personal emergency (e.g., medical emergency, death in family, etc.) causes you to miss a required graded activity, **and** you have official evidence of your illness/emergency (e.g., doctor’s slip). I reserve the right to ask for documentation of the circumstances causing you to miss class.

2. You have an inflexible schedule conflict that you know about in advance (e.g., a religious holiday, medical appointment) **and** we meet about the schedule conflict in advance (i.e., at least 1 week prior). This gives me enough time to make the necessary provisions.

- Please **send me an email** identifying the emergency/conflict, **and tell me in person**.
- Depending on the missed assignment (e.g., in-class assignment or lab-based exam), **I may have to devise an alternative assignment**, with similar difficulty and educational value, in order to accommodate your situation and our course schedule.

*Make-up assignments must be completed within 2 weeks* of the missed assignment, unless the circumstances for the absence justify a longer time period, which must be approved by the instructor.

Students with Special Learning Needs

The University of Louisville is committed to providing access to programs and services for qualified students with disabilities. If you are a student with a disability and require accommodation to participate and complete requirements for this class, notify me immediately and contact the Disability Resource Center (Robbins Hall, 852-6938) for verification of eligibility and determination of specific accommodations. For more information, visit the [Disability Resource Center](https://www.louisville.edu/disability-center).

Online Access

**Blackboard:** ([www.louisville.edu/blackboard](http://www.louisville.edu/blackboard))
This is the main way I will provide assignments and communicate with you. Announcements, grades, assignments, etc. will be posted on the course Blackboard site. Please keep yourself well-informed and in contact throughout the semester.

**Perusall:** ([https://perusall.com/](https://perusall.com/))
You will access the reading assignments by going to Perusall.

*It is the student’s responsibility to frequently check their university email, visit the course on Blackboard, and keep up with the readings in Perusall.* Familiarity with online systems (e.g., Blackboard, Email, Perusall) is necessary for the course.
Sexual Misconduct and Gender Discrimination

As a faculty member (university employee), I am required to report and act on any information about sexual misconduct or gender discrimination you communicate to me, to help resolve the situation.

Sexual misconduct (sexual harassment, sexual assault, and sexual/dating/domestic violence) and sex discrimination are violations of University policies. **Anyone experiencing sexual misconduct and/or sex discrimination has the right to obtain confidential support from the PEACC Program 852-2663, Counseling Center 852-6585 and Campus Health Services 852-6479.** Reporting your incident to any other University employee (including, but not limited to, professors and instructors) is an official, non-confidential report to the University.

To file an official report, please contact the Dean of Students Office 852-5787 and/or the University of Louisville Police Department 852-6111.

For more information regarding your rights as a victim of sexual misconduct, visit the Office for Civil Rights (http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/know-rights-201404-title-ix.pdf). For more information about resources and reporting at UofL, visit the Sexual Misconduct Resource Guide (http://louisville.edu/hr/employee_relations/sexual-misconduct-brochure).

School Closings and Delays

In the case of inclement weather, please check your email and the Blackboard site to see if UofL campus is closed and/or class is cancelled. **Note: It is possible for class to be cancelled even if campus is not closed.** However, even if class does not meet, you may still receive assignments to complete before the next class meeting.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty is prohibited at the University of Louisville. It is a serious offense because it diminishes the quality of scholarship, makes accurate evaluation of student progress impossible, and defrauds those in society who must ultimately depend upon the knowledge and integrity of the institution and its students and faculty. For more information, visit the [Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities](http://sections.5. and 6.)
READING LIST AND ASSIGNMENTS

* Reading assignments must be completed in Perusall by the due date.

**JANUARY 8**

Welcome! Syllabus and Introductions

**JANUARY 10**

Introduction: What is Reasoning? Decision Making?


Total = 2.5 pages

**JANUARY 15 - 17**

Cognition: Information Processing

**Day 1**


Total = 11 pages

**Day 2**

Assignment(s):

This assignment is due at the beginning of class on DAY 2.

- Reasoning and Decision Making in Everyday Life (Activity 1). Ashcraft’s principles of cognition applied to different situations and problems.

**JANUARY 22 - 24**

Habit and Experience: Recognition Primed Decision Making

**Day 1**


**Day 2**


Total = 25 pages
JANUARY 29 - 31

Day 1: Classical Reasoning and Problem Solving


Day 2: Neuropsychology


Total = 25 pages

FEBRUARY 5

Q & A Day

For your participation credit this session, come prepared to ask any questions you have about what we have learned, for the upcoming Exam 1.

Assignment(s):

This assignment is due at the beginning of class.

• Reasoning and Decision-Making in Everyday Life (Activity 2). For this assignment, you will use everything you have learned to design and describe your own theory or framework of reasoning and decision making.

FEBRUARY 7

EXAM 1

In-class exam. Multiple choice and short essay format.

FEBRUARY 12-14

Classic Decision Science (Rational Choice Theory & Utility Models)

Day 1: Utility Theory


Day 2: Neuropsychology


Total = 17 pages
FEBRUARY 19

Decision Making Survey

Complete the survey online BEFORE this class period. See Blackboard for link.

Assignment(s):
- **Reasoning and Decision Making in Everyday Life (Activity 3).** For this assignment, complete the online survey. We will discuss it in class.

FEBRUARY 21 - 26

Bounded Rationality: Heuristics and Biases

Day 1: Irrationality


Day 2: Heuristics and Biases

Total = 33 pages

FEBRUARY 28

Dual Process Theories


Total = 7.5 pages

MARCH 5

Q & A Day

For your participation credit this session, come prepared to ask any questions you have about what we have learned for the upcoming Exam 2.

Assignment(s):
This assignment is due at the beginning of class.
- **Reasoning and Decision-Making in Everyday Life (Activity 4).** For this assignment, you will use everything you have learned to design and describe your own theory or framework of reasoning and decision making. *This will be a revised theory or framework.*
MARCH 7

EXAM 2

In-class exam. Multiple choice and short essay format.

MARCH 12, 14

No Class (Spring Break)

MARCH 19 - 21

Social Norms and Cognitions


Total = 32 pages

MARCH 26 - 28

Day 1: Moral Judgment and Decision Making


Day 2: Politics and Government


Total = 23 pages
### Society Conflict and Cooperation

**Day 1:**

No Readings! **Class Activity (Game 1)**

**Day 2:**


National Geographic Magazine (2016). To the Last Drop.

Total = 27 pages

### Humanistic Rational Choice Theory (Societal Cooperation)

**Day 1:**

No Readings! **Class Activity (Game 2)**

**Day 2:**

**Watch this video interview** of Dr. DeCaro (Start at 11:05 minutes) 10 minutes

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tq8GYsPYttc


Total = 15 pages

### Nudges (“Big Brother”)


Total = 17 pages
Q & A Day

For your participation credit this session, come prepared to ask any questions you have about what we have learned for the upcoming Final Exam (Exam 3).

Assignment(s):

This assignment is due at the beginning of class.

- **Reasoning and Decision-Making in Everyday Life (Activity 5).** For this assignment, you will use everything you have learned to design and describe your own theory or framework of reasoning and decision making. *This will be a revised theory or framework.*

EXAM 3 (Final Exam)

11:30am – 2:00pm
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings (and Perusall)</th>
<th>Assignment Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 8</td>
<td>Welcome! Syllabus and Introductions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>January 17</td>
<td></td>
<td>☐ No Readings (Class Activities)</td>
<td>Homework 1</td>
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<td>January 22</td>
<td>Habit &amp; Experience: Recognition Primed Decision Making</td>
<td>☐ Klein (1999) Chapter 1 and 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 5</td>
<td>Q&amp;A Day</td>
<td><em>Come with questions!</em></td>
<td>Homework 2</td>
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<td>February 7</td>
<td>EXAM 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 14</td>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Wallis (2007). Orbitofrontal Cortex Part 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 19</td>
<td>Decision Survey</td>
<td><em>Complete the survey online BEFORE CLASS. Print your responses and bring to class.</em></td>
<td>Homework 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 21</td>
<td>Bounded Rationality: Heuristics and Biases</td>
<td>☐ Plous (1993)                                                            ☐ Chapters 7, 8, 9</td>
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<td>February 26</td>
<td>...Continued</td>
<td>☐ Radvansky &amp; Ashcraft (2016)</td>
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<td>☐ Dijksterhuis et al. (2006)</td>
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<td>March 5</td>
<td>Q&amp;A Day</td>
<td><em>Come with questions!</em></td>
<td>Homework 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 7</td>
<td>EXAM 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 12, 14</td>
<td>No Class (Spring Break)</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 19</td>
<td>Social Norms and Cognitions</td>
<td>☐ Myers (2005)                                                            ☐ Chapters 6, 7</td>
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<td>March 21</td>
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<td>☐ Green et al. (2001)</td>
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<td>☐ Ginges et al. (2007)</td>
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<td>March 28</td>
<td>Politics and Government</td>
<td>☐ DeCaro et al. (2018)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Readings/Activities</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 2</td>
<td>News: &quot;War on Coal&quot;</td>
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<td>April 4</td>
<td>Societal Conflict &amp; Cooperation</td>
<td>National Geographic Magazine (2016)</td>
<td>Game 1</td>
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<td>Hardin (1968)</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 9</td>
<td>Humanistic Rational Choice Theory</td>
<td>No Readings (Class Activities)</td>
<td>Game 2</td>
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<td>April 11</td>
<td>DeCaro interview</td>
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<td></td>
<td>DeCaro (2018)</td>
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<td>April 16</td>
<td>Nudges (&quot;Big Brother&quot;)</td>
<td>Thaler &amp; Sunstein (2008)</td>
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<td>News Article</td>
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<td>April 18</td>
<td>Q&amp;A Day</td>
<td></td>
<td>Extra Credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 26</td>
<td>EXAM 3 (Final Exam)</td>
<td>11:30am-2:00pm</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* I reserve the right to modify the syllabus when necessary to meet learning objectives, compensate for cancelled classes, or for similar reasons. A new syllabus will be posted in Blackboard and an announcement made in class, whenever a change is made to the syllabus, or the course.

Syllabus created by Dr. Daniel A. DeCaro (3-21-2019)