Judgment and Decision Making
PSYC 621-602

Meetings: Wednesdays, 9-12, Psychology Building 335
Instructor: Heather C. Lench
Office: Psychology Building 287
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Office Hr.: Tuesday & Thursday 10-11, or by appointment
Website: www.heatherlench.com

Contacting Me: You can call or email with questions. Allow 72 hours for a response. I encourage you to contact me with any questions or comments, as well as to discuss your presentation and final paper.

Goals of the Course: This course will introduce you to traditional and contemporary models of judgment and decision-making. We will discuss a broad range of topics, including theories of rational choice (briefly), heuristics and biases, positive illusions and relatively new dual process models that incorporate motivation and emotion to explain and predict decisions. Psychological judgment and decision-making models are relevant to a number of disciplines, including health, business, law, and economics, and we will discuss implications for each of these disciplines.

Reading: Readings will be drawn from scholarly journals and books. Articles will be available on the course website for one week from the start of the course for download and printing. The readings are required and you will need to have a physical copy (either in print or electronically) for class meetings.

Participation (10 points): Students should participate in class discussions. Participation can include any comments that reasonably inform, progress, or evaluate discussion of theories and research. Toward the end of the semester, students will also give a brief 15-minute presentation on the topic of their final paper.

Thought papers (20 points): A brief (typed, half a page, double spaced) thought paper should be submitted to me the Monday before every class (these will be passed along to discussion leaders). Thought papers might include a comment or question (this can be integrative or evaluative of the readings or extend the subject matter into interesting novel directions). You do not need to reach a definitive conclusion in these papers, but they should demonstrate that you have read and thought about the articles and related topics. During the week in which you serve as discussion leader, you do not need to submit a thought paper. Be prepared to take part in discussion and raise your thoughts during class time. No credit will be given for late papers.
Discussion leader (30 points): Each student will serve as a discussion leader twice during the semester (depending on student numbers). The discussion leader will present a comprehensive overview of the articles in a formal presentation. This overview should include potential links among the articles/studies and/or note questions that are unanswered by the articles/studies. The discussion leader will then guide group discussion of the topics using his/her assessment of the articles and the thought papers that were sent by class members.

Paper (40 points): The final paper (about 10-15 double-spaced pages) may be either a critical review of the literature or a proposal for research. The topic should be closely related to and informed by the issues discussed in class. Critical reviews of the literature should be in the form of a standard APA manuscript submitted to a review journal (e.g., Psychological Bulletin) and should not simply describe past research but rather offer a critical analysis and theoretical integration of past research. Research proposals should be in the form of a standard APA manuscript submitted to an empirical journal with an introduction section (describing rationale for the proposed study), a method section (giving specific detail about the proposed methodology), a results section (describing the predicted results), and a discussion section (describing the implications of the predicted results). You are encouraged to meet with me to discuss your paper ideas. Late papers without prior approval will not be graded except under exceptional documented circumstances. The paper is due in my mailbox December 7th, 2011.

Grading: Grades will be based on the total number of points obtained from participation, thought papers, serving as discussion leader, and the final paper.

Total Points: 100
Scores required for each letter designation in the grading system:
A: 90-100 points
B: 80-90 points
C: 70-80 points
D: 60-70 points
F: any score below 60 points

ADA Policy Statement
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal antidiscrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for a reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Department of Student Life, Services for Students with Disabilities in Room 126 of the Koldus Building, or call 845-1637.

Texas A&M University Philosophy of Academic Integrity: Aggies do not lie, cheat or steal nor do they tolerate those who do.
**Week 1 (Aug. 31st): Orientation, Historical Overview**
***ONLY PAGES 3-11 (other pages discuss topics that will be covered later)***
***ONLY PAGES 3-9 (other pages discuss topics that will be covered later)***

**Week 2 (Sept. 7th): Dual Process Theories**

**Week 3 (Sept. 14th): Prospect Theory and Criticisms of Rational Choice**

**Week 4 (Sept. 21st): Heuristics and Biases**


**Week 5 (Sept. 28th): Nudging**


**Week 6 (Oct. 5th): The Meaning of Error**


**Week 7 (Oct. 12th): Risk Perception**


**Week 8 (Oct. 19th): Positive Illusions**

**Week 9 (Oct. 26th): Affective Processes and Decisions**

**Week 10 (Nov. 2nd): Mood and Emotion**


**Week 11 (Nov. 9th): Moral Decisions**

***ONLY THE MAIN ARTICLE – NOT THE COMMENTARIES***


**Week 12 (Nov. 16th): Judgments of Others**


**Week 13 (Nov. 23rd): Thanksgiving holiday**

**Week 14 (Nov. 30th): Presentations on final paper; Lunch**