George Mason University  
Graduate Course Approval/Inventory Form

Please complete this form and attach a copy of the syllabus for new courses. Forward it as an email attachment to the Secretary of the Graduate Council. A printed copy of the form with signatures should be brought to the Graduate Council Meeting. Complete the Coordinator Form on page 2, if changes in this course will affect other units.

Please indicate:  ____X_ NEW  ____MODIFY  ____DELETE

Local Unit:  Psychology  
Graduate Council Approval Date:

Course Abbreviation:  PSYC  
Course Number:  759 

Full Course Title:  Applied Decision Making 

Abbreviated Course Title (24 characters max.):  APPLIED DECISION MAKING

Credit hours:  3  
Program of Record:  PhD in Psychology 

Repeatable for Credit?  _X_ D=Yes, not within same term  
___ T=Yes, within the same term  
___ N=Cannot be repeated for credit 

Up to hours 3

Activity Code (please indicate):  _X_ Lecture (LEC)  ___ Lab (LAB)  ___ Recitation (RCT)  
___ Studio (STU)  ___ Internship (INT)  ___ Seminar (SEM) 

Catalog Credit Format  3:3 :0  
Course Level:  GF(500-600)  ___ GA(700+)  _X___

Maximum Enrollment:  10  
For NEW courses, first term to be offered:  F03

Prerequisites or corequisites:  PSYC 611/612

Catalog Description (35 words or less): Please use catalog format and attach a copy of the syllabus for new courses. This course covers "basic applied" decision making research. The first half of the course reviews basic psychological research on judgment and decision making, and the second half applies this research to various practical problems. The overarching goal is to understand how the basic decision making literature can better inform applied research and practice.

For MODIFIED or DELETED courses as appropriate:

Last term offered:  
Previous Course Abbreviation:  
Previous number:  

Description of modification:

APPROVAL SIGNATURES:

Submitted by:  
email:  

Department/Program:  
Date:  

College Committee:  
Date:  

Graduate Council Representative:  
Date:  
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
Course Coordination Form

Approval from other units: None

Please list those units outside of your own who may be affected by this new, modified, or deleted course. Each of these units must approve this change prior to its being submitted to the Graduate Council for approval.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit:</th>
<th>Head of Unit’s Signature:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graduate Council approval: ___________________________ Date: ____________

Graduate Council representative: ___________________________ Date: ____________

Provost Office representative: ___________________________ Date: ____________
Instructor: Dr. Robert E. Ployhart
Office: 2052 David King Hall
Phone: 993-1279
Office Hours: Thursday 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM; or by appointment
E-mail: rployhar@gmu.edu
Class Hours: Thursday 1:30-4:10
Room: Robinson A206

Recommended Textbooks (not required)


Course Overview and Objectives

This course covers “basic applied” decision making. The first half reviews basic psychological research on judgment and decision making, and the second half applies this research to practical problems. The overarching goal is to understand how the basic literature can better inform applied research and practice.

Each week we will discuss the assigned readings. I will lecture some, but not much. Rather, I expect most of the class to comprise interactive discussions about the concepts highlighted in the readings. We are therefore jointly responsible for making class discussions useful and stimulating. *I want to hear your opinions and suggestions!* Of course, for this to work, you must have read the assigned readings before coming to class. Some weeks require a great deal of reading, but we will not spend the bulk of each class discussing specific readings. Rather, we will spend our time looking for themes and integration.

I will cover the first six weeks of the course. After that, you will each choose one topic and it will be your responsibility to be the “discussant” for that week’s readings. Note that given at least 2 weeks advance notice, I may allow you to change the readings to better suit your interests—but you have to check with me first. This will hopefully make the class more personally relevant.

This goes without saying, but I expect perfect attendance. Class will also start and end promptly, so be sure to show up a few minutes early. If possible, please give advance notice if you will not be able to attend a class.

Grades

Grades are determined as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critique/Discussant</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>50 (= 5 + 15 + 30)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You’ll notice that there is no exam. As long as everyone does the readings and contributes to the class discussions, I see no need for an exam. If either of these becomes problematic, a final exam may be necessary. Please do not miss the deadlines—they are real and important!
Project. A major component of decision making research is the methodology. Given its wide use in organizational settings, we are going to use policy capturing to analyze data. The specific nature of the project will be discussed in more detail later, but you will learn how to analyze a policy capturing design using regression and multilevel models (e.g. HLM). A brief write-up of your findings will be required.

Participation. You must participate fully and actively in class discussion by voicing your opinions, asking questions, and by being constructively critical! This class is meant to be an open forum for discussing these topics; so just say whatever you are thinking.

Critique/Discussant. For one class period, you are the lead discussant. Your job is to lead the class in reviewing the articles, articulating the major themes, preparing discussion points, etc. You should have questions prepared in advance to facilitate discussion. Remember, you want to integrate/contrast the readings, not just discuss each one independently. Note that you may change the assigned readings for your class if you think there are others that are more relevant—but you have to give me 2 weeks advance notice!

In addition to being the discussant/facilitator, you are also expected to provide a critique of the topic/readings. I want you to be constructively—not destructively—critical. Don’t provide a list of critiques; build these into your discussion points. For example, does the research make assumptions that are questionable? Did it adequately answer the questions? What major unanswered questions remain?

Paper. You will be writing a journal-quality paper on a topic that you are interested in. Of course, the topic must involve decision making, but the actual content is entirely up to you. Now, the major purpose of this exercise is to give you practice integrating the decision making literature to identify a question and prepare a study capable of answering this question. It is also to provide you with a (hopefully) publishable study that you can conduct at the conclusion of this course. To this end, I want you to prepare a journal-quality paper that sets-up an actual study you could conduct at the conclusion of this class. This paper must have an introduction, methods section, and proposed analyses section; altogether not longer than 17 pages (excluding title, abstract, references, tables, and figures). Of course, it must be in the APA style, version 5!

Writing such a paper can be a daunting task. To make it more manageable, there will be specific steps.

Step 1: Summary of proposal (5 points). This is a 1-2 page summary of your topic and expected methodology. The key here is to have a clear set of hypotheses and an understanding of how testing these hypotheses will be a contribution to the research literature. If you have questions/difficulty with this part, please set up a time to talk to me before the proposal is due. Feedback will be provided.

Step 2: Rough Draft (15 points). This should be the first full draft of the paper, including all major sections (introduction, methods, proposed results, references, etc.) in APA style. Feedback will be provided.

Step 3: Final Draft (30 points). This is the journal-quality, APA style draft. The goal with this is that you now have a feasible study to conduct after this course; one with a good shot of publication.

Important Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 26</td>
<td>Step 1 of paper due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 10</td>
<td>Project due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 14</td>
<td>Step 2 of paper due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 12</td>
<td>Step 3 of paper due</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Course Schedule

The articles for each topic are presented in the order you should read them.
All topics, readings, and dates subject to change!

1. August 30: Introduction and Overview


   *Much of the Hastie article may be over your head; read/skim and think about how these questions can be answered in organizations. Also, many of these questions provide good ideas for studies!*

2. September 6: “Classical Models of Decision Making”

   Plous (1993). Chapters 7 – 9 (pp. 77-106).


3. September 13: Brunswick/Lens Model & Policy Capturing


   *The Singer article is used for your project, skim it before class as we will discuss it in some detail.*
4. September 20: Methods, generalizability, & rational vs. empirical judgment


*Just skim to get overview of IRT methodology for decision making

5. September 27: Heuristics and Biases


*Focus on introduction and discussion; skim everything else

6. October 4: Cognition and Decision Making


*Skim; focus on main principles of article and their application to I/O.

7. October 11: Social/Contextual Influence and Adaptation


*Skim; focus on identifying main points/implications.
8. October 18: Advances in Application


9. October 25: Decision Making in Recruitment


10. November 1: Decision Making in Selection


*Skim; understand how this would be used in defending legality of selection procedures.

11. **November 8: Decision Making in Performance Appraisal**


12. **November 15: Decision Making in Management, Leadership, and Strategy**


*Skim for implications.

13. **Week of November 22: Decision Making and Organizational Justice**


15. December 6: Decision Making in Motivation & Consumer/Customer Behavior

