

**Communication 3331**  
**Communication and Decision Making**  
**The Ohio State University**  
**Spring 2017**

**Course Instructor:** Jason C. Coronel, Ph.D.

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**Office hours:** Tuesday, 5:10 to 6:10 pm and by appointment

**Office Location:** Derby Hall 3127

**Course location:** Smith Lab 2150

**Course time:** Tuesday, 3:05-5:05 pm

### **Course Description**

How should a “rational” individual make decisions? Why do many people have a difficult time understanding probabilities? How do we design messages in a way that would allow people to make better decisions? This course attempts to answer these and many other questions by providing a broad overview of the psychological and communication issues involved in decision making. At the end of this course, students should also be able to use this knowledge in order to make more informed decisions in their everyday lives.

### **Course Objectives**

(1) To become familiar with the normative, psychological, and communication perspectives and principles of decision making. (2) To help students apply these principles and perspectives to actual decision making problems that they encounter in their everyday lives.

### **Required Materials**

All required readings will be posted on Carmen.

### **Course Format**

The course is composed of lecture sessions. *During lecture, I will discuss a large amount of information that go beyond the assigned readings (such information will also appear in the exams).* Thus, it is important that you attend each session and take good notes.

## Course Requirements

(1) *Exam 1 (20 pts.), Exam 2 (20 pts.), and Exam 3 (50)*. Exams will assess your knowledge of all aspects of the course. Exam 3 will test your knowledge of material covered throughout the entire course.

**READ CAREFULLY**: Make-up tests will only be given when the student provides an appropriate justification for missing the scheduled test date. Make-up exams will be arranged for university-excused or unavoidable circumstances only (e.g., deaths, personal/family illness and emergencies) with written verification. The written verification must have the contact information of someone who can verify your reasons for missing an exam. Appropriate justification depends on each case and will be decided by Dr. Coronel. The instructor also reserves the right to withhold the exam if a student arrives more than 15 minutes late on exam days (i.e., he/she will receive a zero on the exam). If the student arrives after the first person has completed/left the exam, the student will not be allowed to take that exam and will receive an automatic zero.

(2) *Problem Sets (60 pts.)*. There will be 7 in-class problem sets throughout the course. You will do these problem sets as a group. Every member of the group will receive the same grade. Your lowest grade will be dropped. If you miss class, you will not be allowed to re-take a missed problem set.

(3) *Group Presentations (50 pts.)*. Depending on the class size, you will be part of a 4 to 6 person group. Every member of the group will receive the same grade. Your group presentation will focus on applying concepts covered in class to a real world decision making situation. Every member of the group will be required to deliver some aspect of the presentation. The group will also be required to meet with me prior to the date of the presentation in order to discuss the content of the presentation. If the group fails to meet with me, the entire group will lose 10 points.

As this is a hybrid course, your group presentations will require a significant time commitment **outside** of class. You need to (1) understand the relevant concepts (2) apply it to a real world example and (3) coordinate with your group in order to create a coherent and high quality presentation. Most of you will only have one week from the time we cover the relevant concepts (that you will be required to present) to the date of your group presentation.

Furthermore, if a member of the group misses the group presentation due to an excused absence (the written verification must have the contact information of someone who can verify your reasons for missing an exam), he or she will be required to present the entire group presentation to me in order to receive the group's grade. Otherwise, this person will receive zero points.

## Policies and Procedures

Students are expected to act responsibly and abide by the following policies:

**Laptops, cell-phones, and recording devices.** All cell phones must be silenced during class. Students must refrain from reading the newspaper, texting, listening to headphones, e-mailing, or using the Internet during class unless it is part of the lecture. Students may be asked to leave class for such behaviors.

Laptops and other electronic devices are allowed in class. **However**, they must only be used for taking down notes. **If a student is using an electronic device for something other than class-related activities and it is distracting to me, I will kick the student out of class.**

Any form of audio or video recording is **not** allowed in class. Students are also not permitted to take pictures of the projection screen. The instructor does **not** give permission for the lecture sessions to be recorded (in either an audio or video format).

**Slides on Carmen.** PowerPoint slides will be posted on Carmen. However, you need contextual information provided during lecture in order to understand the content on the slides. Students, therefore, need to take good notes during lectures.

**Academic misconduct.** Academic misconduct will not be tolerated on any occasion. It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>

## **Disability Services**

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>

**Graduating Seniors and Other Students.** Graduating seniors (and other students) who “need” this course to graduate should work especially hard to ensure that they will pass this course. To be fair to all students in the class, there will *not* be opportunities for students to re-take exams or re-complete assignments in order to raise their grades. *It is the student’s responsibility* to ensure that he or she receives a passing final grade by working diligently and responsibly throughout the semester. *Exceptions will not be made.*

**Grading Scheme.** At the end of the course, dividing your total number of points by 200 will yield your final course grade percentage. Letter grades will be assigned using the following grading scheme. **THERE WILL BE NO ROUNDING UP OF GRADES.**

- 93 - 100 (A)
- 90 - 92.9 (A-)
- 87 - 89.9 (B+)
- 83 - 86.9 (B)
- 80 - 82.9 (B-)
- 77 - 79.9 (C+)
- 73 - 76.9 (C)
- 70 - 72.9 (C-)
- 67 - 69.9 (D+)
- 60 - 66.9 (D)
- Below 60 (E)

**Tentative nature of this syllabus.** This syllabus is an agreement between the instructor and the student. Events that transpire over the semester may require me to modify the syllabus. In the event I need to modify the syllabus, I will announce the modification in class. However, it is your responsibility to keep up with any such modifications and be aware of current policies, deadlines, etc.

**By staying enrolled in this class, the student agrees to abide by the policies described in the syllabus.**

### Tentative Schedule

		Topic	Readings	Problem Sets	(Group Presentations) Real world applications of:
Jan	10	Introduction to the course, Reference class			
Jan	17	Absolute vs. Relative Risk, Expected Value, Prosecutor's Fallacy	Spitalnik, Chap 8 - Mathematics of Likelihood	1	
Jan	24	Diagnostic Tests and Bayes Rule	Chap 1 - Power of Natural Frequencies	2	Absolute vs. Relative Risk, Expected Value
Jan	31	Rational Choice, Condorcet's Paradox, Decision Making under Uncertainty	Decision Theory reading, Voting Paradox – Mind Your Decisions	3	Diagnostic Tests and Bayes Rule
Feb	7	Exam 1			
Feb	14	Game Theory Part 1	Miller - Chapter 1 and 4	4	Rational Choice/Condorcet's Paradox/Decision Making under Uncertainty
Feb	21	Game Theory Part 2	Miller - Chapter 6 and 7	5	Game Theory Part 1
Feb	28	Game Theory Part 3	Miller - Chapter 2	6	Game Theory Part 2

<b>Mar</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>Game Theory Part 4</b>	<b>Miller - Chapters 11, 12, 13, 14</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>Game Theory Part 3</b>
<b>Mar</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>Exam 2</b>			
<b>Mar</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>Biases and Numeracy</b>	<b>Plous - Chapter 10,11,12,13</b>		<b>Game Theory Part 4</b>
<b>Apr</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Media Coverage of Risk</b>			<b>Biases and Numeracy</b>
<b>Apr</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>Misinformation and Decision Making</b>			<b>Media Coverage of Risk</b>
<b>Apr</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>Exam 3</b>			