

# SYLLABUS: COMM 3331-0020 (27919) COMMUNICATION AND DECISION MAKING OSU UNIT ONLINE TERM

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## Course Overview

This class examines the intersection of communication and decision-making. We will explore and dissect what a decision is and what “decision-making as a process” means. In addition, we’ll compare interpersonal and group decision-making contexts. The central idea for the class is to develop an understanding of descriptive and prescriptive models of decision-making so that students will come away with an understanding of how to improve their decision-making.

## Course description

**This course will be delivered primarily in asynchronous time, 100% online.** This course examines decision-making processes. How do individuals and groups make decisions? What factors influence the decision-making process? How can communication complicate or simplify decision-making? What leads individuals to make good vs. bad decisions?

To examine these questions, we will explore the psychological mechanisms and processes that underlie decision-making. We will complete case studies throughout the semester to help us identify what a decision is, how we evaluate the pros and cons of alternatives, and the pitfalls that lead individuals and groups to make sub-optimal decisions.

Presented in an online format, this course will take a dynamic approach to learning. We will venture through various aspects of decision-making theory. Although all assignments are completed individually, you should engage with other students through online discussions. Thus, certain technologies are required for taking this course (see Course Technology section).

Throughout the 15 weeks of class, you’ll develop a more thorough understanding of what constitutes a decision; methods of thinking through decisions in a systematic and scientific manner; why decisions are often less than optimal; and, through this endeavor, an improved decision-making toolkit.

## Course learning goals and outcomes

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Be able to define what constitutes a decision.
- Understand what psychological factors influence decision-making.
- Describe and implement basic decision-making methods, such as the Lens Model.
- Comprehend how communication can help avoid common pitfalls in making individual and group decisions.

Students will develop these competencies through various online quizzes, tests, and a term paper.

## Mode of delivery

This course will be presented fully online with asynchronous lectures and videos and a synchronous professor/TA check-in each week on Wednesday at 3:00pm EST.

The weekly check-in will be held on Zoom (see Carmen for the link).

## How this course works

- **Online lectures**  
Recorded lectures will be uploaded with all other materials every Wednesday. More than one lecture may appear in the upload. The videos are short to provide the most optimal viewing experience and to increase attention and engagement. Watch a lecture, take a break, come back to the next.
- **Readings**  
All readings are expected to be completed prior to viewing the lectures.
- **Online Check-in**  
The professor will check-in with students each week for approximately 30 minutes on Zoom. The Zoom link is provided on Carmen.

## Course materials

### Required

The texts for this class represent both a high-level theoretical approach to decision making (i.e., Hastie & Dawes, 2010) and a more grounded applied understanding of typical real-world decisions (i.e., Ariely, 2009). These texts are some of the best of the last 30 years on decision-making theory and practice. They will provide both breadth and depth for the students' understanding of decision-making processes.

Hastie, R., & Dawes, R. M. (2010). *Rational choice in an uncertain world* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.

Available from The Ohio State University Bookstore and Amazon  
<https://www.amazon.com/Rational-Choice-Uncertain-World-Psychology/dp/1412959039>)

Ariely, D. (2009). *Predictably irrational, revised and expanded edition: The hidden forces that shape our decisions*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.

Available from The Ohio State University Bookstore and Amazon  
[https://www.amazon.com/Predictably-Irrational-Revised-Expanded-Decisions-ebook/dp/B002C949KE/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1544020705&sr=1-1&keywords=predictably+irrational](https://www.amazon.com/Predictably-Irrational-Revised-Expanded-Decisions-ebook/dp/B002C949KE/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1544020705&sr=1-1&keywords=predictably+irrational))

\*\*\* In the interest of facilitating an up-to-date course and fostering learning, other course materials may be made available during the semester. If so, these materials (or how to obtain them) will be provided on Carmen. No additional costs are to be expected for these materials. \*\*\*

## Grading and faculty response

### Grading

Following are the point values and/or percentages for each assignment:

| Assignments            | Points and/or Percentage |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 10 Online Quizzes      | 200 points (20%)         |
| Test 1                 | 250 points (25%)         |
| Test 2                 | 250 points (25%)         |
| Term Paper Milestone 1 | 30 points (3%)           |
| Term Paper Milestone 2 | 70 points (7%)           |
| Term Paper             | 200 points (20%)         |
| Participation          | 30 points (3%)           |

### Assignments

- 10 Reading Quizzes (20%)
  - Open-book/note quizzes will be administered throughout the semester on a weekly schedule.
  - Quizzes will be posted on Wednesdays. All quizzes are due by the following Tuesday 11:59pm EST.
  - The quizzes represent a check-in point for the students and the professor. They ensure that students are keeping up with the readings and that the students are understanding the basics of each reading. The quizzes also present in an abbreviated format, similar questions as to those that will be found on tests.
  - You will have 10 minutes to complete each quiz.

- You may take each quiz twice.
- I will drop the lowest quiz grade.
- Each quiz is equally weighted toward the final grade.
  
- 2 Tests (50% of grade)
  - 2 tests will be administered during the semester: Test 1 is during Week 8, and Test 2 is during Week 15
  - The tests will assess students' knowledge of the readings and lectures as well as their ability to apply their knowledge to related contexts.
  - Tests will be open book and open note. There will, however, be a time limit for the tests of 90 minutes.
  - Each test is weighted equally toward the final grade.
  
- Term Paper (30% in total)
  - The individual term paper will ask each student to write a paper on any of the topics we have discussed in class.
  - The paper should be at least 10 pages long (double-spaced; excluding references), should apply at least one decision-making model/method/theory we have discussed, should discuss practical implications, and should include at least five references to scientific studies, which you can find on Google Scholar or a computer database (e.g., PsycINFO). The references should be in American Psychological Association (APA) format. Information and a rubric will be provided in Carmen at the time of assignment.
  - There are two milestone assignments related to the term paper at different points in the semester. These milestone assignments will help you stay on track so that your final product is higher quality.
    - Milestone Assignment 1 (3% of final grade) is due during Week 5.
      - This assignment asks students to: (a) identify their topic of interest, (b) write a paragraph on what they plan to write about this topic, and (c) provide an annotated bibliography of at least five references that they plan on using in their final paper.
    - Milestone Assignment 2 (7% of final grade) is due during Week 10.
      - This assignment is an outline of your term paper. By this point, students should have completed the primary research needed to write the term paper. The outline should be at least 4 pages long (double-spaced) and have enough detail that the professor has a firm understanding of what the student will present in their final term paper.
  - The Final Term paper (20% of final grade) is due during exam week.
  
- Participation (Bonus 3%)
  - Each week, there will be a Discussion Board on Carmen.
  - The purpose of these discussion boards are to provide an area for students to

- interact and document their understandings of the readings. Students can bounce ideas off each other, post connections that they made to other course material, links to blogs or podcasts... basically anything that furthers student learning.
- Students who opened and viewed all lectures, readings, etc., and who made contributions to 8 of the course's discussion boards will be eligible to receive 3% added to their final grade.
  - Note: Students may also choose to complete the participation requirement by completing research studies through C-REP, the communication research pool. Each research credit earned on C-REP equals 1% of extra credit. Please see the C-REP document on Carmen for additional information.

## Late assignments

Due dates are provided in the course schedule. Late assignments will be penalized 5% per day. Extensions and other accommodations will be provided if absences or late assignments are the result of medical emergencies. In these cases, an alternative assignment may be substituted by the professor.

## Grading scale

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

**Please note:** Carmen Canvas, OSU's grading and class management software, does not round fractions up. Please take that into account in computing grades. I do not manually round up grades.

# Attendance, participation, and discussions

## Credit hour and work expectation

This is a 3-credit-hour course. According to Ohio State policy, students should expect around 3 hours per week of time spent on direct instruction (instructor content and Carmen activities, for example) in addition to 6 hours of homework (reading and assignment preparation, for example) to receive a grade of (C) average.

## Student participation requirements

There is no formal attendance policy for this course. However, you should always view lectures and complete readings for this class.

## Faculty feedback and response time

I am providing the following list to give you an idea of my intended availability throughout the course. (Remember that you can call **614-688-HELP** at any time if you have a technical problem.)

### General Questions

If you have questions about course content, please attend office hours.

### Grading and feedback

For assignments, you can generally expect grading to be completed within 10 days. Online quizzes and tests will be graded immediately and will be posted once all students have completed the quiz/test.

### E-mail

I will reply to e-mails within **24-48 hours on school days**.

## Discussion and communication guidelines

The following are my expectations for how we should communicate as a class. Above all, please remember to be respectful and thoughtful.

- **Writing style:** This course is intended to prepare you for future communications as a professional. Assignments should be approached in this manner. Please proofread, edit, and include appropriate language.
- **Tone and civility:** Let's maintain a supportive learning community where everyone feels safe and where people can disagree amicably. Furthermore, rude or impatient communications are generally not appreciated in professional situations. Please consider your words as if you were a professional when communicating with other students, the instructor, and the teaching assistant.
- **Citing your sources:** When requested, please cite your sources to back up what you say. (For the textbook or other course materials, list at least the title and page numbers. For online sources, include a link.)

Please first contact the TA for any questions you have. Then, if the TA is unable to provide a satisfactory answer, contact me and copy the TA on your email.

# Course Technology

For help with your password, university e-mail, Carmen, or any other technology issues, questions, or requests, contact the OSU IT Service Desk. Standard support hours are available at <https://ocio.osu.edu/help/hours>, and support for urgent issues is available 24x7.

- **Carmen:**
  - Carmen, Ohio State’s Learning Management System, will be used to host materials and activities throughout this course. To access Carmen, visit [Carmen.osu.edu](https://carmen.osu.edu). Log in to Carmen using your name.# and password. If you have not setup a name.# and password, visit [my.osu.edu](https://my.osu.edu).
  - Help guides on the use of Carmen can be found at <https://resourcecenter.odde.osu.edu/carmen>
  - **This online course requires use of Carmen (Ohio State's learning management system) and other online communication and multimedia tools. If you need additional services to use these technologies, please request accommodations with your instructor.**
    - [Carmen accessibility](#)
- **Carmen Zoom:**
  - Office hours will be held through Ohio State’s conferencing platform, Carmen Zoom. A separate guide to accessing Carmen Zoom and our office hours is posted on the course Carmen page under Files.
  - Students may use the audio and video functions if a webcam and microphone are available. If not, there is still a chat function within Carmen Zoom for the student to live chat with the professor or TA in the virtual office hours room.
  - [Carmen Zoom](#) help guide
- **Self-Service and Chat support:** <http://ocio.osu.edu/selfservice>
- **Phone:** 614-688-HELP (4357)
- **Email:** [8help@osu.edu](mailto:8help@osu.edu)
- **TDD:** 614-688-8743

## Baseline technical skills necessary for online courses

- Basic computer and web-browsing skills
- Navigating Carmen

## Necessary equipment

- Computer: Current Mac (OS X) or PC (Windows 7+) with high-speed internet connection

- Web cam and microphone
  - Webcams or devices with webcams may be available to our grad students. The School of Communication has a small pool of iPads and laptops that are available for faculty/staff/grad students needing a device to check out. If you need such a device, submit a request to the School of Communication's technical support personnel ([asctech@osu.edu](mailto:asctech@osu.edu)).

### Necessary software

- Word processor with the ability to save files under .doc, .docx, .rtf, or .pdf. Most popular word processing software programs including Microsoft Word and Mac Pages have these abilities.
- OSU students have access to Microsoft Office products free of charge. To install, please visit [https://osuitsm.service-now.com/selfservice/kb\\_view.do?sysparm\\_article=kb04733](https://osuitsm.service-now.com/selfservice/kb_view.do?sysparm_article=kb04733)

## Other course policies

### Student Academic Services

Arts and Sciences Advising and Academic Services' website provides support for student academic success. Information on advising issues such as tutoring, transfer credits, academic standing, and contact information for Arts and Sciences advisors can be obtained through this website. The site is: <http://advising.osu.edu/welcome.shtml>

### Student Services

The Student Service Center assists with financial aid matters, tuition and fee payments. Please see their site at: <http://ssc.osu.edu>

### Copyright Disclaimer

The materials used in connection with this course may be subject to copyright protection and are only for the use of students officially enrolled in the course for the educational purposes associated with the course. Copyright law must be considered before copying, retaining, or disseminating materials outside of the course.

### Diversity

The School of Communication at The Ohio State University embraces and maintains an environment that respects diverse traditions, heritages, experiences, and people. Our commitment to diversity moves beyond mere tolerance to recognizing, understanding, and welcoming the contributions of diverse groups and the value group members possess as individuals. In our School, the faculty, students, and staff are dedicated to building a tradition of diversity with principles of equal opportunity, personal respect, and the intellectual interests of those who comprise diverse cultures.

## Title IX

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race). If you or someone you know has been sexually harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources at <http://titleix.osu.edu> or by contacting the Interim Ohio State Title IX Coordinator, Molly Peirano, at [titleix@osu.edu](mailto:titleix@osu.edu)

## Mental Health

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing.

If you are or someone you know is suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life's Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting [ccs.osu.edu](http://ccs.osu.edu) or calling 614-292-5766. CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on-call counselor when CCS is closed at 614-292-5766.

If you are thinking of harming yourself or need a safe, non-judgmental place to talk, or if you are worried about someone else and need advice about what to do, 24-hour emergency help is also available through the Suicide Prevention Hotline (Columbus: 614-221-5445)

## COVID-19 and Illness Policies

### University COVID policies

This is a placeholder for policies to be announced by OSU.

### Student illness or absence

If *you* are too ill to participate in this course due to COVID-19 or another illness, please contact the instructor as soon as you are able. All materials will be made available on Carmen, including lecture recordings and slides. Alternate assignments or extensions may be arranged.

Continuous engagement with this course is essential to learning the material. Students are expected to attend class and engage with assignments and discussion prompts for every scheduled meeting, participating at least once per week for courses with fully remote participation. Students who need to miss class or who are not able to participate due to illness (COVID-19 or other illnesses), exposure to COVID-19, care for family members exposed to COVID-19 or other reasons are expected to contact the instructor as soon as possible to arrange for accommodation. Students in special situations or those requiring specific, long-term or

other accommodation should seek support from appropriate university offices including but not limited to: Student Advocacy (<https://advocacy.osu.edu/>), Student Life Disability Services (<https://slds.osu.edu/>), and the Office of Institutional Equity (<https://equity.osu.edu/>).

### **Instructor illness or absence**

If the *instructor* is too ill to teach the course for a period of time, the designated backup for this course will step in. You will be notified via email from the School of Communication.

## **Academic Integrity Policy**

### **Academic Misconduct**

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/>

### **Tentative Nature of the Syllabus**

This syllabus represents a contract in the works. Events that transpire over the semester may require me to modify the administration of this course and therefore the syllabus. In the event I need to modify the syllabus, I will announce the modification in class and on Carmen. Ultimately, it is your responsibility to keep up with any such modifications and be aware of current policies, deadlines, etc.

## **Disability Services**

The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. SLDS contact information: [slds@osu.edu](mailto:slds@osu.edu); 614-292-3307; <http://slds.osu.edu>; 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.

## Course schedule (tentative\*)

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| Week | Day     | Assignment(s)   | Readings<br><i>RC</i> = Rational Choice<br><i>PI</i> = Predictably Irrational | Topic(s)  |
|------|---------|---|---|---|
| 1    | Jan. 13 |   | Syllabus<br>RC – Ch. 1 & 2  | Class Structure and Expectations<br>Thinking & Deciding; What Is Decision Making? |
| 2    | Jan. 20 | Reading Quiz 1 (due Tues. Jan. 19 by 11:59pm EST)   | RC – Ch. 3  | General Framework for Judgment  |
| 3    | Jan. 27 | Reading Quiz 2 (due Tues. Jan. 27 by 11:59pm EST)   | RC – Ch. 4  | Anchoring and Adjustment  |
| 4    | Feb. 3  | Reading Quiz 3 (due Tues. Feb. 2 by 11:59pm EST)  | RC – Ch. 5  | Judging Heuristically   |
| 5    | Feb. 10 | Reading Quiz 4 (due Tues. Feb. 9 by 11:59pm EST)<br><br>Term Paper Milestone 1 Due (due Wed. Feb 10 by 11:59pm EST) | RC – Ch. 6 & 7  | Explanation-based Judgments; Chance and Cause                                     |
| 6    | Feb. 17 | Reading Quiz 5 (due Tues. Feb. 16 by 11:59pm EST)   | RC – Ch. 8  | Thinking Rationally about Uncertainty   |
| 7    | Feb. 24 | No Class (Instructional Break)  |   |   |

|    |         |   |                  |   |
|----|---------|---|------------------|---|
| 8  | Mar. 3  | Test 1 (assigned Mar. 1; due by Mar. 3 at 11:59pm EST)  |                  | Test 1  |
| 9  | Mar. 10 | Reading Quiz 6 (due Tues. Mar. 9 by 11:59pm EST)  | PI – Ch. 1-4     | Relativity; Supply & Demand; Cost of Zero Cost; Social Norms      |
| 10 | Mar. 17 | Reading Quiz 7 (due Tues. Mar 16 by 11:59pm EST)<br><br>Term Paper Milestone 2 Due (due Wednesday Mar. 17 by 11:59pm EST) | PI – Ch. 5-9     | Arousal; Procrastination; Endowment Effect; Options; Expectations |
| 11 | Mar. 24 | Reading Quiz 8 (due Tues. Mar. 23 by 11:59pm EST)   | Online           | Groupthink  |
| 12 | Mar. 31 | No Class (Instructional Break)  |                  |   |
| 13 | Apr. 7  | Reading Quiz 9 (due Tues Apr. 6 by 11:59pm EST)   | Online           | Methods to Improve Decision-making                                |
| 14 | Apr. 14 | Reading Quiz 10 (due Tues Apr. 13 by 11:59pm EST)   | RC – Ch. 11 & 12 | Descriptive and Prescriptive Decision Theories                    |
| 15 | Apr. 21 | Test 2 (assigned Apr. 19; due by Apr. 21 at 11:59pm EST)  |                  | Test 2  |
| 16 | Apr. 26 | Term Paper Due  |                  |   |