

# SYLLABUS: COMM 3331-0010 (18138)

## COMMUNICATION AND DECISION MAKING

### OSU UNIT ONLINE TERM

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## Course Overview

This course examines decision-making as a process; comparisons between interpersonal, bargaining-negotiation contexts, and group organizations; and descriptive and prescriptive models of decision-making in small groups and organizations.

The central idea for the class is for students to develop (a) a richer understanding of what decision-making entails and (b) awareness of how social scientists conduct research studies on decision-making. After completing the course, students should have a more advanced toolkit for employing various decision-making strategies and evaluating the soundness of decisions.

## Course description

**This course will be delivered in asynchronous time, 100% online.**

The course is divided into three sections.

### **Section I: Defining decision-making and understanding a decision-making context.**

In the first section of the course, we will develop a common understanding of what “decisions” are and what decision-making as a process entails. We will examine how communication variables and processes intersect with decision-making contexts.

### **Section II: Comparing individual, group, and organizational decision-making contexts.**

In the second section of the course, we will discuss what distinguishes individual, group, and organizational decision-making contexts. We will focus attention on how to maximize the benefits and minimize the disadvantages of group decision-making.

### **Section III: Communication and decision-making in applied contexts**

In the third section of the course, we will explore well-known biases and heuristics as they relate to decision-making. We will investigate how our environments can bound our decision-making in ways that lead us to make less than optimal decisions. We will also explore current challenges regarding decision-making and how the social science of decision-making could improve our world.

Presented in an online format, this course will take a dynamic approach to learning. We will venture through various aspects of decision-making theory with examples and case studies. Although all assignments are completed individually, you should engage with other students through online discussions administered through Packback (see Course Technology section).

## 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.
- 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. Synchronous group meetings with the professor and TA will be offered throughout the course on Wednesdays at 11am. A link to the synchronous group meeting will be posted in Carmen (see Zoom links section).

## How this course works

- **Online lectures**  
Recorded lectures will be uploaded with all other materials every Monday. 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 should 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

The total cost of materials for this course is approximately \$29. Required readings will be posted to Carmen in PDF format. The \$29 materials costs relates to access to Packback.co (see below).

### Required Readings

Readings for this class will be drawn primarily from two textbooks. 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. Because we are not using the full texts, PDF scans of the relevant chapters will be uploaded to Carmen.

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)

Other online readings will be posted (see Course Schedule). Readings will be approximately 20 pages per week.

### Required Software

#### Packback Questions

Participation is a requirement for this course, and the Packback Questions platform will be used for online discussion about class topics. Packback Questions is an online community where you can be fearlessly curious and ask open-ended questions to build on top of what we are covering in class and relate topics to real-world applications.

#### Packback Requirements:

Your participation on Packback will count toward 20% of your overall course grade.

There will be a Weekly Sunday at 11:59PM EST deadline for submissions. In order to receive full credit, you should submit the following per each deadline period:

- 1 open-ended Question every week with a minimum Curiosity Score of 65, worth 33.33% of each assignment grade
- 2 Responses every week with a minimum Curiosity Score of 65, worth 66.67% of each assignment grade

Half credit will be provided for questions and responses that do not meet the minimum curiosity score.

### **How to Register on Packback:**

An email invitation will be sent to you from [help@packback.co](mailto:help@packback.co) prompting you to finish registration. If you don't receive an email (be sure to check your spam), you may register by following the instructions below:

Create an account by navigating to <https://questions.packback.co> and clicking "Sign up for an Account"

- Note: If you already have an account on Packback you can log in with your credentials.

Then enter our class community's lookup key into the "Looking to join a community you don't see here?" section in Packback at the bottom of the homepage.

**Community Lookup Key: 868df131-05c2-4b1c-8742-b2fd0baac075**

Follow the instructions on your screen to finish your registration.

Packback may require a paid subscription. Refer to [www.packback.co/product/pricing](http://www.packback.co/product/pricing) for more information.

How to Get Help from the Packback Team:

If you have any questions or concerns about Packback throughout the semester, please read their FAQ at [help.packback.co](http://help.packback.co). If you need more help, contact their customer support team directly at [help@packback.co](mailto:help@packback.co).

For a brief introduction to Packback Questions and why we are using it in class, watch this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OV7QmikrD68>

\*\*\* 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 will be incurred to access these materials. \*\*\*

# Grading and faculty response

## Grading

Final class grades are derived from the following assignments.

Assignments	Percent of Final Grade
11 Packbacks (3 dropped)	20%
11 Quizzes (3 dropped)	20%
3 Tests	60%
Extra Credit	2%
Total	102%

## Assignments

### 11 Packbacks (due Sunday by 11:59pm EDT/EST on the week they are assigned)

Packbacks represent the writing component of the course. Each week you will participate in online discussions with some of your fellow classmates through the Packback Questions platform (see Materials section of Syllabus).

Each week, you are required to submit by Sunday at 11:59pm EST:

**One open-ended question** with a *minimum curiosity score of 70* – Worth 33.33% of each assignment's final grade.

**Two responses** with a *minimum curiosity score of 70* – Each worth 66.67% of each assignment's final grade.

\*\*\*\_Half credit will be provided for questions and responses that do not meet the minimum curiosity score \*\*\*

I will drop the 3 lowest Packback scores.

The Online Discussion component of the course is intended to help you synthesize knowledge gains across weeks, pose questions to your fellow students and the instructors that you are wrestling with, and facilitate general involvement with the course materials. For a brief introduction to Packback Questions and why we are using it in class, watch this video:

<http://vimeo.com/packback/Welcome-to-Packback-Questions>

### **11 Quizzes (due Sunday by 11:59pm EDT/EST on the week they are assigned)**

Open-book/note quizzes will be administered throughout the semester on a weekly schedule. Each quiz covers the current week's material and is due by Sunday at 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 lectures. The quizzes also present—in an abbreviated format—questions similar to those that will be found on tests.

You will have 10 minutes to complete each quiz. You may take each quiz three times. Each quiz is equally weighted toward the final grade.

I will drop the 3 lowest quiz grades.

### **3 Tests (due Sunday by 11:59pm EDT/EST on the week they are assigned)**

Three tests will be administered during the semester: Test 1 is during Week 5, and Test 2 is during Week 9, and Test 3 is due during week 16.

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 120 minutes. Each test is weighted equally toward the final grade.

### **Extra Credit (bonus of up to 2%)**

Students may also choose to earn extra credit 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. If you have a circumstance that will prevent you from participating in studies to earn the extra credit, there are alternative assignments that you can complete. See C-REP document on Carmen for additional information.

Another extra credit opportunity for up to 1% of your grade may be offered during the semester.

## **Late Assignment and Make-ups**

Late/missed assignments (other than Tests) cannot be made up. To account for absences/illnesses/etc., I am dropping 3 Quizzes and 3 Packbacks. Late tests may be made up without penalty with documentation of the medical emergency that resulted in missing the deadline.

## Grading scale

93–100: A  
90–92: A-  
87–89: B+  
83–86: B  
80–82: B-  
77–79: C+  
73–76: C  
70–72: C-  
67–69: D+  
60–66: D  
<59: E

### Notes on Grading:

- 1) Carmen is terrible at calculating grades. It generally weights scores inaccurately and applies strange rules to grade calculations within a category. Do **NOT** rely on Carmen to tell you an accurate grade.
- 2) I will round final grades to the nearest whole number based on the rule of significant digits. A grade of .4% and below will be rounded down while the grade of .5% and above will be rounded up. For example, a 76.4% would be rounded down to 76% while a 76.5% will be rounded up to a 77%.

## 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.

## Discussion Policies

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.)

## Email policy

Email is not designed for clarification questions. Questions regarding course content should be addressed during office hours with either the professor or the teaching assistant (TA).

The TA is responsible for being the first point of contact in the course. When sending emails, contact the TA first and copy the professor on the email. The TA will then respond within 24-48 hours. If the TA's response is deemed unsatisfactory by the student, the student should contact the TA and let them know that they wish to escalate the concern to the professor. It is at this point the TA will then reach out to the professor regarding the situation and copy the student on the correspondence.



## Course schedule (tentative\*)

\* 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. Please note that modifications will only occur that will increase the quality of learning.

Week	Day	Topic(s)	Readings RC = Rational Choice PI = Predictably Irrational	Assignments
<b>Section I: Defining decision-making and understanding a decision-making context</b>				
1	10-Jan	Class Overview Syllabus Defining a Decision Evaluating Decision-making	RC (Ch. 1)	Packback 1 Quiz 1
2	17-Jan	Diagramming a Decision Probability Expected Value <i>In observance of Martin Luther King Jr Day, materials will be uploaded on Tuesday rather than Monday.</i>	RC (Ch. 2)	Packback 2 Quiz 2
3	24-Jan	Rationality and Expected Value	RC (Ch. 11)	Packback 3 Quiz 3
4	31-Jan	Conditional Probabilities Bayes' Theorem	RC (Ch. 8)	Packback 4 Quiz 4
5	7-Feb	Summary and Evaluation of Learning during Section I		Test 1
<b>Section II: Comparing individual, group, and organizational decision-making contexts</b>				
6	14-Feb	Individual Decisions vs. Group Decisions	Wikipedia entries on Group Decision-Making, Shared Information Bias, and Hidden Profiles	Packback 4 Quiz 4

7	21-Feb	Groupthink	Janis (1991) <i>12 Angry Men</i> (1957)	Packback 5 Quiz 5
8	28-Feb	Overcoming Groupthink and Maximizing the Potential of Group Decision-making	Bang and Frith (2017)	Packback 6 Quiz 6
9	7-Mar	Summary and Evaluation of Learning during Section II		Test 2
10	14-Mar	Spring Break Week <i>No classes, No Assignments</i>		
<b>Section III: Communication and decision-making in applied contexts</b>				
11	21-Mar	Group Decision-making in Practice: Methods of voting	Wikipedia entries on First Past the Post and Instant Runoff Voting	Packback 7 Quiz 7
12	28-Mar	Biases and Heuristics Introduction: Anchoring and Adjustment and the Decoy Effect	RC (Ch. 4) PI (Ch. 1)	Packback 8 Quiz 8
13	4-Apr	When Supply and Demand Fails: Social Norms and Decision-making	PI (Ch. 4-5)	Packback 9 Quiz 9
14	11-Apr	Endowment, Options, and Expectations: Leading Ourselves Astray	PI (Ch. 8-10)	Packback 10 Quiz 10
15	18-Apr	Algorithms and Decision-making	Kochenderfer et al. (2022) – Ch. 1	Packback 11 Quiz 11
16	24-Apr	Summary and Evaluation of Learning during Section III		Test 3

## 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](http://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](http://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
- **Packback:** If you have any questions or concerns about Packback throughout the semester, please read their FAQ at [help.packback.co](http://help.packback.co). If you need more help, contact their customer support team directly at [help@packback.co](mailto:help@packback.co).

### 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.