

Syllabus
OIDD/MGMT 690: Managerial Decision Making
Fall 2022

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Course Description and Objectives

This course has two objectives.

The first is to improve the quality of students' judgments and decisions. Students will learn to better understand, evaluate, and accumulate evidence, and to be aware of and avoid common inferential errors and systematic biases in their own decision-making. They will also learn to make better forecasts of uncertain events.

The second is to improve students' ability to predict and influence the behavior of others. By understanding how other people decide and behave, students will be better able to motivate desired behavior in others. This course accomplishes this by expanding the rather limited toolbox provided by standard economics (incentives and education) to include tools of influence prescribed by a realistic understanding of human behavior.

Materials

There is no textbook for this course. Instead, I have compiled a list of required readings, which are posted on Canvas according to their due dates. Whenever possible, I have chosen readings that are policy and/or management relevant, that are well-written and interesting, and that facilitate your understanding of one or more of the core concepts of this course.

Grading Criteria:

Surveys / Forecasts / Written Assignments	25%
In-Class Quizzes	40%
Online Quizzes	35%

Surveys, Written Assignments, and Forecasts

During the semester, I will periodically ask you to do online surveys and other written assignments, both individually and in groups. These assignments will be described in more detail when they are assigned.

In-Class Quizzes

Every class for which readings are assigned, there will be a 45% chance of having to take a short quiz that tests your knowledge of the readings assigned that day. Whether or not you have a quiz will be determined by a random number generator. Thus, having a quiz one day is not predictive of whether you will have a quiz the next day (i.e., don't fall prey to the gambler's fallacy!). These quizzes are designed to ensure that you have carefully read and retained all that you have been assigned to read. Most of the quizzes will require you to summarize one (or more) of the readings, but other quiz formats (e.g., multiple choice; short answer) are possible. Each quiz will be graded on a scale ranging from 0 to 2. Your lowest quiz score will be dropped.

You will receive a score of zero if you are absent or late for a quiz. However, three times during the semester, you can protect yourself against the possibility of a missed quiz if, prior to the start of class, you submit a well-written

summary and analysis of the readings for that day. If you do this, your quiz score will simply be blank; you will not receive a 2/2 if your section has a quiz that day. You should submit this summary via email to Ines Valenzuela (inesvmc@wharton.upenn.edu). The subject line of your email should read: "OIDD 690: Summary/Analysis" and your filename should include the date of the class you are submitting the quiz for, as well as your PennKey (i.e., the start of your email address), and be formatted like this: "mmdd_PennKey." So if I were missing class on September 8th, my filename would be "0908_jsimmo.doc". This document should include ~250 words of summary and ~250 words of thoughtful analysis per reading. Your analysis of each reading is not to exceed one page, single-spaced, using 12-point Times New Roman font and one-inch margins. Thus, if one reading is due that day, your assignment should be one page; if two readings are due that today, your assignment should be two pages; and so on. Submissions that do not adhere to all of these requirements will not be accepted. Submissions that are incomplete – for example, that summarize one reading on a day when two readings are due – will not be accepted and will not receive partial credit. To make up for the missed quiz, you must demonstrate that you have carefully read and understood the assigned readings and that you put time, thought, and effort into your summary. An obviously slipshod, last-minute effort will not be accepted, and neither will a summary submitted after the start of class.

If an illness or family emergency causes you to miss more than three days of class, that will be no problem. Just send me an email and we will figure it out.

Online Quizzes

Research shows that you learn better if you are consistently quizzed on the material than if you just try to cram for the occasional exam. So I've decided to stop giving exams, and to administer quizzes on the material every two weeks.

These quizzes will be timed and conducted online, though you will have flexibility on when you can take them (typically anytime from Thursday afternoon to Tuesday morning). They will consist of short-answer/essay questions, and they will be cumulative. They will also be open book and open notes. Late quizzes will not be accepted without advance permission from me. I'll provide more details in class and on Canvas as we get closer to the first quiz date.

Class Policies:

If you are sick, do not come to class. As stipulated above, you can protect yourself from missing in-class quizzes if you are sick. If you are feeling a little bit off and are not sure whether you are sick and you decide to attend class, please wear a mask.

Masking: At the start of the semester, masking will be optional. I reserve the right to mandate masking later in the semester if covid cases increase by a lot. I will define what "a lot" means.

Switching Sections: If you decide to switch sections on a given class day, it will be treated as an absence, meaning that unless you submit a summary of the reading(s) prior to the start of class, you will earn a zero on a quiz if your section has one. Thus, the only benefit to switching sections is to be present for the lecture in the event that you absolutely cannot make it to your section.

Late Assignments: Written assignments that are submitted late but within 24 hours of the deadline will receive no more than half credit. Written assignments submitted more than a day late will receive a grade of zero. Quizzes cannot be taken late and will receive a zero. Penalties for lateness will be waived if you are suffering from health problems or if you are dealing with a family emergency. In such cases, please complete the assignment and reach out to me to explain what's going on.

Laptop/Phone Policy: With a few exceptions, this class does not require any use of your computers, phones, iPads, or the internet, especially during the lectures. Thus, when we are in person, I expect all electronic devices to be put away at the start of class. Please see me if you have a special need that requires a laptop during class.

Cheating: I abhor cheating, and if necessary I will incur significant personal costs in order to stop and catch cheaters. Do not cheat or plagiarize, and do not help anyone else cheat or plagiarize. If you are caught doing any of these things, you will fail the course and be reported to the administration. If you know that someone in the class is cheating, please report it to me ASAP. Such reports will be confidential.

Disruptions: I reserve the right to fail or reduce the grade of any student who interferes with the learning environment of other students. This includes students who disrupt class by leaving class early (without permission), by using wifi devices in class, or those whose behavior I judge to be unacceptable.

Contacting Me: If you would like to contact me during the semester, please just email me directly. I almost never check my messages on Canvas, so please do not message me through Canvas. If your email is time sensitive, I will do my best to respond quickly. If your email is not time sensitive, it may take me a bit longer to respond, as I have small children to manage and to (poorly) negotiate with, as well as PhD students who are depending on me for their long-term survival. If you need to email about a grading issue, please include the class TAs, Beidi and Ines, on the email.

The class schedule is on the next page

Class Schedule

Here is the schedule. Note that, except for the final quiz, assignments for Tuesday classes are due Tuesday mornings (by 10:00 am Eastern), and assignments for Thursday classes are due Thursday mornings (by 10:00 am Eastern).

Class Schedule (As of 8/10/22. Subject to change)					
Class	Day	Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments (Due @ 10 am)
1	Tues.	8/30	Introduction & Decision Evaluation	[No Readings]	[No Assignments]
2	Thurs.	9/1	Experimentation I	Evidence-Based Management (Pfeffer) How Little We Know (Rosenzweig)	Survey #1
3	Tues.	9/6	Experimentation II	The 60-Year Scientific Screwup That Helped Covid Kill (Molteni)	
4	Thurs.	9/8	Understanding Evidence I	The COVID Drug Wars (Dominus) The Odds of That (Belkin)	
5	Tues.	9/13	Understanding Evidence II	This Overlooked Variable Is The Key To The Pandemic (Tufekci) The Cancer Cluster Myth (Gawande)	Online Quiz #1
6	Thurs.	9/15	Understanding Evidence III	Podcast: Is Facebook Spying On You? (Reply All)	Data Analysis Assignment
7	Tues.	9/20	Understanding Evidence IV	What If Games Were Shorter? (Simmons)	How Do You Know That? Assignment
8	Thurs.	9/22	Understanding Evidence V	The Triumph of Mediocrity (Ellenberg)	Forecasting Questions
9	Tues.	9/27	Understanding Evidence VI	Metacritic Has A (File-Drawer) Problem (Simmons) Science Isn't Broken (Aschwanden)	Online Quiz #2
10	Thurs.	9/29	Motivated Reasoning I	Why Do Good Accountants Do Bad Audits? (Bazerman)	
11	Tues.	10/4	Motivated Reasoning II	Dr. Drug Rep (Calat)	Group Forecasts
12	Tues.	10/11	Intuition I	Big & Bad (Gladwell)	Survey #2
13	Tues.	10/25	Intuition II	Blink (Gladwell) Power of Intuition (Klein)	Online Quiz #3
14	Thurs.	10/27	Heuristics & Biases I	How Doctors Think (Groopman)	
15	Tues.	11/1	Heuristics & Biases II	Connecting The Dots (Gladwell) Curse of Knowledge (Pinker)	Disagreement Assignment
16	Thurs.	11/3	Heuristics & Biases III	The Press Secretary in Your Mind (Klein)	Survey #3
17	Tues.	11/8	Overconfidence	Delusions of Success (Lovallo)	Online Quiz #4
18	Thurs.	11/10	Human vs. Statistical Decision Making I	Who's On First (Thaler) How I Acted Like A Pundit (Silver)	
19	Tues.	11/15	Human vs. Statistical Decision Making II	Why It's So Freaking Hard To Make A Good COVID-19 Model (Koerth) Noise (Kahneman)	Survey #4
20	Thurs.	11/17	Combining Opinions	A Promised Land (Obama) Don't Trust Your Gut (Bock)	
21	Tues.	11/29	Psychology of Choice I	Reversals (Kahneman)	Online Quiz #5
22	Thurs.	12/1	Psychology of Choice II	Bernoulli's Errors (Kahneman)	
23	Tues.	12/6	Behavior Change I	Rewarding A, While Hoping For B (Kerr) When Doctors Make Mistakes (Gawande) Nudge (Thaler)	
24	Thurs.	12/8	Behavior Change II	You Need Hands (Underwood) The Checklist (Gawande)	Online Quiz #6 (Due Tues. 12/13)