PSYC4850A:
The Psychology of Choice
Fall 2017

Room: TH173
Time: Tues. & Thurs. 9:25 – 10:40
Website: Moodle

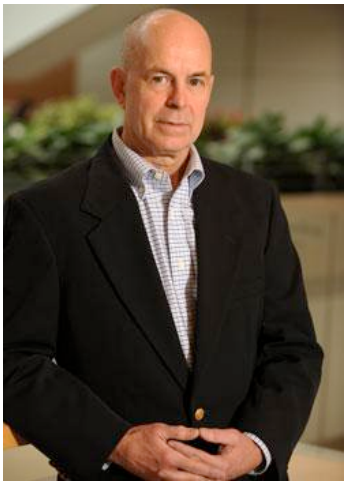
Instructor: David Logue
Instructor's email: david.logue@uleth.ca
Instructor's office: D858
Instructor's office hours: Monday 2:00 – 4:00

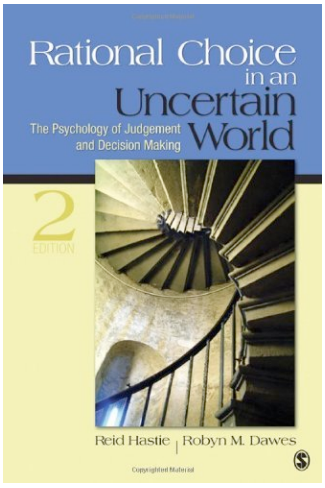
Description

Choice is an integral component of adaptive behavior in humans, other organisms, and even computer programs. The mechanisms of choice (*how* agents make choices) have been studied, more or less independently, by many different fields including Philosophy, Psychology, Neuroscience, and Evolutionary Biology. In this seminar course, we will study choice research across disciplines, with the goal of synthesizing a coherent framework for understanding this fundamental mechanism of adaptive behavior.

Book

Rational Choice in an Uncertain World by Hastie and Dawes, second edition. Buy it.





Weekly schedule

Tuesdays

Pre-Quiz (15 min) Each Tuesday's class will begin with a short quiz on the assigned chapter from Hastie and Dawes. Study the chapter carefully before coming to class. Students who arrive late will not be given extra time.

Chapter review (60 min) We will then discuss the chapter. One student will be assigned to be the "expert" on each section. Each student will serve as an expert four times during the semester. The expert list can be found on Moodle. Consult this list as soon as possible and note the sections for which you are responsible. Experts should not summarize their section. Rather, they should lead discussion of the most important ideas by (1) stating key ideas in their own words, (2) asking thought-provoking (as opposed to knowledge-testing or mundane) questions, and (3) interpreting challenging material, including graphs or math. Experts should come prepared with detailed notes, including several discussion questions. Their goal is to facilitate an interesting conversation, without dominating it. Each chapter will be covered in one hour, but some have more sections than others. Therefore, some expert sections will have to be covered more quickly than others. I will grade experts on a 3-point scale, with up to one point awarded for each of the following categories: (1) Addressing the most important points (given the time allotted), (2) demonstrating understanding, and (3) asking thought-proving questions. All students are encouraged to participate in the discussion. This is how you get your participation points on Tuesdays.

Thursdays

Student lectures (45 min) Over the course of the semester, each student will give one 10-minute lecture on a reading that compliments the material from the textbook. The readings are on Moodle. Students will sign up for readings on the first day of class. Students must post their presentations (in Powerpoint) to Moodle before class. Ten minutes is not very long, so you'll have to distill these down to the key points. You don't have to cover everything, but do your best to teach your peers about the most important ideas in the paper. There will a few minutes for questions after each student lecture. I exhort student lecturers to visit office hours to discuss their lectures with me beforehand. Grades on student lectures are based on presentation design (20%), teaching effectiveness (30%), and content (50%).

OR

Group project presentations (45 min) In other weeks, student groups will spend up to 10 minutes presenting their projects. I will assign projects one or more weeks in advance. Students must post their presentations (in Powerpoint) to Moodle before class. Grades on group projects are based on correct application of choice principles (50%), creativity (20%), and clarity (30%). All group members will receive the same mark, but group composition will change for each assignment.

Grading

Grade breakdown

30% Quizzes
10% Participation
15% Expert sections
22.5% Student lectures
22.5% Group exercises

All students can earn up to one point of participation credit each day for contributing meaningfully to the discussion, student lecture, or discussion questions. Take a lot of notes as you read the chapter so that you remember what you want to say during the discussion.

Students receive up to one point each day of class for satisfactory participation (chapter discussion and discussion questions).

A+ > 95	C+ = 69 – 72
A = 90 – 95	C = 64 – 68
A- = 85 – 89	C- = 60 – 63
B+ = 81 – 84	D+ = 55 – 59
B = 77 – 80	D = 50 – 54
B- = 73 – 76	F < 50

I reserve the right to increase all grades by a set amount (but don't count on it).

Other Course Policies

The classroom is an environment of mutual respect. Expect to treated with respect by your classmates and your professor, and understand that they expect the same from you. We are all adults who are responsible for our actions.

Make-up assignments are for promptly communicated, documented emergencies only. They will be harder than the original assignments.

Please do not use electronic devices when the professor or other students are talking or for any off-topic purpose. Discretely step out of the room if you need to use your device.

Students wishing to meet with David should do so during office hours. We will only schedule meetings outside of office hours if the student cannot meet during office hours. (I like meeting with students, but I'm very busy, and there are a lot of you.)

Weekly schedule

The schedule may change in response to changes to the academic calendar or if we get behind.

Date	Chapter topic	Content
Thurs Sept. 7	Thinking and deciding	Chapter 1 (no quiz); syllabus, "Lecture lecture", Sign up for student lectures online
Tues Sept. 12	Intro to decision making	Chapter 2
Thurs Sept. 14		SL: Freedom to choose Soon et al. 2008 (and Supplement) Dennett 2013 Harris & Harris 2017 Assign: Decision tree exercise
Tues Sept. 19	The Lens Model	Chapter 3
Thurs Sept. 21		Decision tree exercise
Tues Sept. 26	Anchor and Adjust	Chapter 4
Thurs Sept. 28		SL: Hidden influences on preference and choice Haidt 2001 Zajonc 1968 Johnson & Goldstein 2004
Tues Oct. 3	Decision Heuristics	Chapter 5
Thurs Oct. 5		SL: Amount of choice Redelmeier & Shafir 1995 Iyengar & Lepper 2000 Schwartz et al. 2002
Tues Oct. 10	Chance and Cause	Chapter 7 (note, we skip chapter 6)
Thurs Oct. 12		SL: Choice and conformity Iyengar & Lepper 1999 Ariely & Levav 2000 Witte & Ryan 2002 Assign: Lens model exercise
Tues Oct. 17	Thinking Rationally	Chapter 8
Thurs Oct. 19		Lens model exercise
Tues Oct. 24	Preferences	Chapter 9
Thurs Oct. 26		SL: Violations of rationality Callander et al 2012 Gigerenzer & Goldstein 1996 Lea & Ryan 2015 Assign: Bayes theorem exercise

Tues Oct. 31	From Preferences to Choices	Chapter 10
Thurs Nov. 2		Bayes theorem exercise Assign: Choice strategies exercise
Tues Nov. 7	Expected Utility Theory	Chapter 11
Thurs Nov. 9		Choice strategies exercise Assign: Expected Utility Theory exercise
Tues Nov. 14	No class	
Thurs Nov. 16	No class	
Tues Nov. 21	Prospect Theory	Chapter 12
Thurs Nov. 23		Expected Utility Theory exercise
Tues Nov. 28	New Directions	Chapter 13
Thurs Nov 30		SL: Cognitive sensory biases Rodd et al. 2001 Bateson & Healy 2005 Logue & Forstmeier 2008
Tues Dec. 5		SL: Collective decision making Couzin et al. 2005 Sasaki & Pratt 2011 Reid et al. 2015