

# PSYC4850A: The Psychology of Choice Fall 2016

**Room:** W870

**Time:** Tues. & Thurs. 9:25 – 10:40

**Website:** Moodle

**Instructor:** David Logue

**Instructor's email:** david.logue@uleth.ca

**Instructor's office:** D858

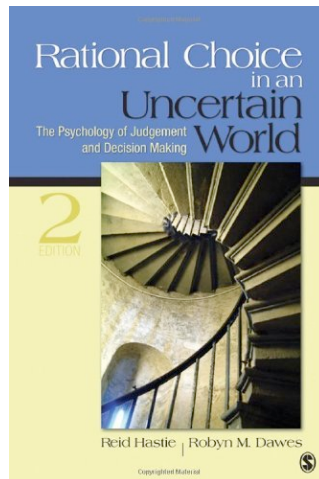
**Instructor's office hours:** Tues. & Thurs. 12:00 – 1:00

## 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.



## 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, each of four 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.

**THEN**

**Discussion questions (45 min)** Groups will form, and I will give each group one or more questions to discuss. After a period of group discussion, groups will take turns presenting their answers to the class. There is no grade, but students can earn participation points during this part of the class.

# Grading

## Grade breakdown

20% Quizzes

20% Participation

20% Expert sections

20% Student lectures

20% 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 be 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. Discreetly 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. 8  | Thinking and deciding    | Chapter 1; syllabus, sign up for student lectures,   |
| Tues Sept. 13  | Intro to decision making | Chapter 2; "Lecture lecture"   |
| Thurs Sept. 15 |                          | <u>SL: Freedom to choose</u><br>Iyengar & Lepper 1999<br>Soon et al. 2008 (and Supplement)<br>Dennett 2013<br><br>Assign: Lens model exercise      |
| Tues Sept. 20  | The Lens Model           | Chapter 3  |
| Thurs Sept. 22 |                          | Lens model exercise  |
| Tues Sept. 27  | Anchor and Adjust        | Chapter 4  |
| Thurs Sept. 29 |                          | <u>SL: Hidden influences on preference and choice</u><br>Zajonc 1968<br>Zajonc 1980<br>Johnson & Goldstein 2004                                    |
| Tues Oct. 4    | Decision Heuristics      | Chapter 5  |
| Thurs Oct. 6   |                          | <u>SL: Violations of rationality</u><br>Haidt 2001<br>Callander et al 2012<br>Lea & Ryan 2015  |
| Tues Oct. 11   | Chance and Cause         | Chapter 7 (note, we skip chapter 6)  |
| Thurs Oct. 13  |                          | <u>SL: Choice and conformity</u><br>Ariely & Levav 2000<br>Pronin et al. 2007<br>Witte & Ryan 2002<br><br>Assign: Bayes Theorem exercise           |
| Tues Oct. 18   | Thinking Rationally      | Chapter 8  |
| Thurs Oct. 20  |                          | Bayes Theorem exercise   |
| Tues Oct. 25   | Preferences              | Chapter 9  |
| Thurs Oct. 27  |                          | <u>SL: Amount of choice</u><br>Redelmeier & Shafir 1995<br>Iyengar & Lepper 2000<br>Schwartz et al. 2002<br><br>Assign: Choice strategies exercise |

|               |                             |  |
|---------------|-----------------------------|--|
| Tues Nov. 1   | From Preferences to Choices | Chapter 10   |
| Thurs Nov. 3  |                             | Choice strategies exercise<br>Assign: Expected Utility Theory exercise                                 |
| Tues Nov. 8   | No class                    |  |
| Thurs Nov. 10 | No class                    |  |
| Tues Nov. 15  | Expected Utility Theory     | Chapter 11   |
| Thurs Nov. 17 |                             | Expected Utility Theory exercise<br>Assign: Prospect Theory exercise                                   |
| Tues Nov. 22  | Prospect Theory             | Chapter 12   |
| Thurs Nov. 24 |                             | Prospect Theory exercise   |
| Tues Nov. 29  | New Directions              | Chapter 13   |
| Thurs Dec. 1  |                             | <u>SL: Cognitive sensory biases</u><br>Rodd et al. 2001<br>Bateson & Healy 2005<br>Akre & Johnson 2014 |
| Tues Dec. 6.  |                             | <u>SL: Collective decision making</u><br>Couzin et al. 2005<br>Sasaki & Pratt 2011<br>Reid et al. 2015 |