COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

The field of judgment and decision making has grown rapidly in the past 50 years. It has had a significant impact on areas of business such as marketing, communication, human resource management, accounting, finance, and organizational design, as well as other applied areas such as medicine, public policy and the law. Experimental research on judgment and choice was said to be “psychology’s leading intellectual export to the social sciences as well as to a host of applied fields” (Tetlock 2002, Psychological Review).

The purpose of this course is to provide students with a solid foundation for critical thinking and research on the judgment, decision-making and choice aspects of consumer behavior, marketing, and business in general. This course is neither a comprehensive review of the seminal works in Judgment and Decision Making nor a thorough treatment of the field’s influence on marketing. Instead, it should be perceived as a survey of select works in behavioral decision making with their relevance and impact on marketing. The goal of the seminar is two-fold:

1. to foster a critical appreciation of some of the existing knowledge in behavioral decision research, and its implications for marketing
2. to explore research opportunities for adding to that knowledge.

An ancillary goal of the course is to provide students with an understanding of research methodology, which is fostered through the spectrum of methodologies contained in the readings. We will read articles not just for their conceptual content, but also as case studies of the decisions that a researcher makes in conceptualizing a research question, collecting and analyzing data, and designing both field and laboratory studies. Thus in students’ reading of empirical studies, they should pay attention to the methodological details as well as to the results.

This course is intended to help prepare students for a research career. It is important that academic researchers have “cultural literacy” and knowledge of the existing tools in the area of judgment, decision-making, and choice. For students with a particular interest in the topics we cover, the course will also provide students with the opportunity to discover areas of interest and help them enhance their expertise in these areas. For those whose interests lie elsewhere, the course will
facilitate your understanding of the field and the breadth of topics and methodologies employed in our understanding of judgment and decision making in marketing.

This course will be conducted as a research seminar, which means that students will be expected to take an active role in each and every class session. Each week we will discuss three or more articles. The articles will be a mixture of “classics” or seminal pieces and more recent papers.

### COURSE MATERIALS

Required Readings will be provided. All articles will be distributed digitally before class. It is your decision whether to print them out or not. If cost is an issue, let us know and we will ask department staff to provide hard copies for those who request them. The articles are typically listed alphabetically and not by priority. Students should read all of the articles closely. Note those listed as “additional” do not need to be read, but are listed for those who want further readings on a topic. Please see the Grading section for more information.

### GRADING

**Assessment and Assignments**

1. **Class contribution (20%)**
   You are responsible for all of the readings that will be discussed in a seminar-format in class. Come to the seminar prepared to discuss each article in-depth and to present your ideas about the major ideas, contributions, and limitations of each article (see the guideline questions for reading articles below). In-class contribution will be assessed based on the quality and consistency of participation. The quality of our class discussions depends on how well-prepared you are and on your willingness to share the outcome of your preparation with the class. High quality contributions are those that reflect both depth and breadth of knowledge gained from the assigned readings, are clearly stated and effectively communicated, and are insightful and relevant to the issues under discussion. Further, high quality contributions are those that generate discussion by yielding a new perspective.

2. **Assignments (10%)**
   Each week along with the readings you will be asked to complete a short assignment. The assignments range from identifying articles related to a particular topic to brief paper reviews. Assignments will typically be distributed in the previous class session and are due either in class or via email prior to the following class, as announced.

3. **Final exam (35%, 4/21/22)**
   The questions on the final exam will ask you to reflect on and integrate the different concepts and research domains discussed in class. Details on the format of the exam will be discussed in class.

4. **One major research idea (35%, presentation due 4/28 and paper due 5/5)**
   The major project in this class is to develop a full-length research paper. Your proposal should describe a new empirical study on any topic in the general area of consumer research that interests you. You may extend one of the research ideas developed in this class, or explore an entirely new area with this proposal. You cannot use projects you are already involved with (e.g. with a faculty
member) or projects you have developed in other classes. You are required to go beyond reviewing the literature by proposing original hypotheses and designing a study to test one or more of these hypotheses. Specifically you will need to provide an in-depth review of the selected topic (going beyond the papers discussed in class), develop a conceptualization of the problem, develop measures, define the analyses, and outline the expected results. Note that you do not need to actually gather and analyze data. In other words, this proposal should look a lot like a publishable paper with the results section missing.

The research presentation should include:

1. Motivation
2. Lit Review
3. Contribution
4. Hypotheses
5. Methodology for at least one study

Although students are not required to conduct any empirical data collection or analyses for this project, they are required to develop a proposal that is detailed enough in terms of hypotheses to be tested. This includes the study design, method and procedure. Students should use style guidelines from to either a major journal in the field (e.g. JCR) or an established organization (e.g. APA, University of Chicago) to format their paper prior to submission. The proposal should be no more than 25 pages of text, double spaced.

A proposal (description) should introduce your main idea and your predictions and should clearly specify the contribution you expect to make with your paper. In order to force you to become clearer writers and communicators, the proposal should be written in outline format. Essentially every idea that will become a paragraph in your paper later on should be represented by at least one bullet point in your outline. This way it will become quickly apparent to you (and us) where there are logical jumps and inconsistencies.

You will present your idea to us and the class on April 28th. Your final paper is due May 5th.

**EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, the USC Emergency Information web site ([https://emergency.usc.edu/](https://emergency.usc.edu/)) will provide safety and other information, including electronic means by which instructors will conduct class using a combination of USC’s Blackboard learning management system (blackboard.usc.edu), teleconferencing, and other technologies.
USC Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual, independent work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligation both to protect your own academic work from misuse by others and to avoid using another’s work as your own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. Scampus, the Student Guidebook, (www.usc.edu/scampus or http://scampus.usc.edu) contains the University Student Conduct Code (see University Governance, Section 11.00). The recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A.

Should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty, students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review. The Review process can be found at: http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/. Failure to adhere to the academic conduct standards set forth by these guidelines and our programs will not be tolerated by the USC Marshall community and can lead to dismissal.

Academic Conduct:

Students are expected to make themselves aware of and abide by the University community’s standards of behavior as articulated in the Student Conduct Code. Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in Scampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in Scampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Specifically, the following are our policies on academic integrity for this course. Our policy for written assignments is that all these assignments are to be completed individually. It will be considered a violation of the Student Conduct Code if any discussion about a written assignment has occurred among students enrolled in this class in this or past semesters or from a student to, for example, a faculty member (except discussion with us, of course). In other words, if you have questions about assignments, please direct them to us. Students discussing assignments will receive a -0- for the assignment.

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355– 24/7 on call
https://studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling/
Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call
suicidepreventionlifeline.org
Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)- (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity |Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost’s Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call
dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call
dps.usc.edu Non-emergency assistance or information.

**Student Accessibility Services**

USC is committed to making reasonable accommodations to assist individuals with disabilities in reaching their academic potential. If you have a disability which may impact your performance, attendance, or grades in this course and require accommodations, you must first register with the Office of Student Accessibility Services (https://osas.usc.edu/). OSAS provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with the Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from OSAS. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. OSAS is located in GFS (Grace Ford Salvatori Hall) 120 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for OSAS is (213) 740-0776. Email: ability@usc.edu.

**Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity**

The USC Emergency Information web site (https://emergency.usc.edu/) provides safety and other information.
# Course Outline and Predicted Schedule

*(Thursdays 2-4:50 p.m.)*

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<td>Introduction to Consumer Decision-Making</td>
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<td>Decision Strategies</td>
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<td>Mental Accounting and Budgeting</td>
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<td>Intertemporal Choice</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>3/3</td>
<td>Expected, Experienced and Predicted Utility</td>
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<td>Experiences vs. Material Goods</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<td>Consumer Financial Decision-Making</td>
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<td>Final Paper Due</td>
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Background Readings

Classics you should be familiar with
An essential part of becoming a scholar in any area of study is to become familiar with the fundamental theories, concepts, and language of the field. Below is a list of classic papers that we will not specifically discuss in class, but that you should have read in order to have a fundamental understanding necessary for our class discussions. Since everybody comes to this class with different prior experiences you may already be familiar with these papers. But if not, you should have read them by week three.


Recommended Books

These books provide a good starting point for exploring many of the topics discussed in class. Particular if you are unfamiliar with a topic they may offer a quick summary of a theory or phenomenon.

The books by Plouse (1993) and Mlodinow (2009) are written for a general audience, the other books are edited volumes with chapters written by the eminent researchers in the field of decision making.


**Relevant Annual Review Chapters**

[In general, Annual Review chapters are an excellent reference and provide solid review of a field.]


Seminar Readings

Please read the papers in the order listed. You should also answer the following questions when they apply, and be prepared to address the question in our discussion.

1. Do you find the paper interesting? Why or why not? If not, what would make it more interesting?
2. What is the contribution? In other words, why did the paper get published?
3. What is the theory? Are they offering a new theory, building on an existing theory or does the paper lack theory?
4. What is the underlying conceptual mode? – Try to draw the model using boxes and arrows.
5. How are major concepts operationalized? Does the operationalization match the conceptual model? Is the data analyzed the best data for the testing the theory? How could it be improved?
6. What are the marketing implications? Can you apply the concepts in the marketing context?

Further, you should be prepared to discuss research ideas, extensions, potential studies you thought about when reading the articles, etc.

READINGS TO BE PROVIDED ON FULL SYLLABUS