

SOCIAL JUDGMENT AND DECISION-MAKING

Psychology 493E

Wednesday, 7:00-9:45pm

Meeting room: Bill Hall 409

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION:

Patrick Heck - Patrick_Heck@Brown.edu

Patrick's office hours: Wednesday, 5:00pm (Oasis), or by appointment. Although I commute to campus on Wednesday afternoons, I am available via skype appointments on other days of the week.



COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Making judgments and decisions is an inescapably social endeavor. Who should I marry? Where will I go to college? Salad or pizza for lunch today? Sometimes, we have less control over decisions like this than we think. This course will explore the psychological factors that influence how we perceive, judge, and make decisions in a social context. In particular, we will often ask whether human behavior is rational or not. We will survey the field of social judgment and decision-making (SJD) using an experimental approach to decide and compare how individuals *should* behave (as prescribed by a rational-actor model) and how they *actually* behave. Students in this course will be armed with a theoretical and methodological knowledge base of accuracy and bias in human judgment.

The course will be conducted in three major 'units:' The Self, Game Theory, and Morality. Because the topic of each unit is informed by a unique theoretical perspective (respectively: egocentrism, behavioral economics, and cultural/biological evolution), this course offers a high-level approach to human psychology grounded in an experimental and data-driven paradigm. A particular challenge for us to approach as a class will be to find ways to reconcile these perspectives' (often competing) predictions for human behavior. This will become clear to students as we recreate experimental procedures in the classroom, often putting ourselves in research participants' shoes.

By the conclusion of the course, students will have a working knowledge of the factors that underlie how we perceive, think about, and make decisions involving other people. This course will be useful for students interested in psychological science, human behavior, and the idiosyncrasies of the human condition. These topics will provide a foundation for study in advanced topics in experimental social psychology, teaching useful experimental skills useful for senior thesis projects, independent study, and post-baccalaureate education.

COURSE GOALS

By the end of this course, students will be able to do the following:

- a.) Articulate major theories, experimental methods, and data in social judgment and decision-making.
- b.) Compare prescriptive rationality (what a rational model tells us we *should* do) with observed behavior (what the data tell us we *actually* do).
- c.) Comprehend empirical journal articles from start to finish (including statistical results).
- d.) Lead a critical discussion of a contemporary research article among peers.
- e.) Propose a logical and tractable extension or supplement to a recent published experiment.

EVALUATION

Students will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

In-class participation (30%)

In-class presentations (15% each x2)

Brief commentaries (5% each x2)

Final paper (30%)

Extra credit (3%)

Your *participation* grade will reflect your level of engagement with the material and contribution to the class. This means attending all classes, reading the assigned papers before class, and contributing to the discussion in a meaningful way during most class sessions

Each student will give lead two *in-class presentations* during the semester. These presentations will include two components. First, the student will summarize and clarify the theory, method, and results of the target paper (15 minutes). The student will then lead an open discussion on the points of the paper s/he finds the most interesting (20-25 minutes). Presentations should be at least 30 minutes in total, but will be cut off after 40 minutes to allow time for the next speaker. Presentations and discussions will be evaluated according to clarity of presentation, theoretical engagement and comprehension of the material, and effective facilitation of open discussion. I encourage presenters to be creative! Consider showing a relevant video, finding a popular news article that demonstrates or denies the finding, or enacting the experimental method in our class. Interactive elements like this tend to breed lively discussion, which is good for you, the class, and your presentation grade.

In addition to their own presentation, each student will also write two *brief commentaries* (one to two pages) on a paper of his/her choosing. These brief commentaries are designed to prepare students to complete their longer and more in-depth final paper due at the end of term. Brief commentaries must be on a paper you do not present.

The *final paper* assignment is designed to allow students the freedom to propose their own experiment, be it a supplement to or extension of one of the many papers we read throughout this course. You may choose one of the papers we read for class or find a paper of your own (if you choose to find your own article, you must get it approved by me. Outside papers must be in peer-reviewed journals, have an experimental design, and be published no earlier than 2005). This is your chance to improve psychological science in your own way – feel free to be creative in your design (i.e., your proposal doesn't have to be limited by available resources). Final papers will be assessed according to criteria of theoretical engagement, logic and tractability of the proposed experiment, consultation of outside sources, and writing clarity. Students will give a five-minute overview of their proposed experiment on the last day of class.

Finally, each student has the opportunity to earn 3% of his or her final weighted average back by submitting a 1 page summary of an example of bad experimentation. Students will find a news story on popular media and discuss how a.) the experimental approach taken in the story could be improved or b.) how the story's argument or conclusion could be strengthened by a well designed experiment.

Note: detailed assignment guides and rubrics will be made available on the course website.

A NOTE ON JOURNAL ARTICLES

There will be technical terms in every article, but do not be intimidated by jargon. Check a glossary or Google the terms. Not all internet sites are accurate or helpful, so look for converging information (credible sites are usually of the .edu variety). Obviously, you can consult your instructor as well, but doing your own research will help you better remember the terms.

For empirical articles, first read the Abstract, the beginning of the Discussion, and the Conclusions (last paragraph of the discussion). Then read the Introduction and the Results. Finally, read the Methodology. The Method section is important, but it is much easier to understand as the *tool* that helped the authors answer their questions and back up their conclusions.

RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

Mental Health

College Student Mental Health

- The Connecticut College Counseling Center: <http://www.conncoll.edu/campus-life/student-counseling-services/>
- Half of Us: <http://www.halfofus.com>
- The Jed Foundation: <http://www.jedfoundation.org/>
- ULifeLine: <http://ulifeline.org/page/main/Home.html>
- Active Minds: <http://activeminds.org> (Consider joining the CC chapter!)
- Fresh Check: <http://freshcheckday.com/>

General Mental Health Advocacy/Information/Support

- NAMI: <http://www.nami.org/>
- SAMHSA: <http://www.samhsa.gov/>
- SAMSHA ADS Center: <http://www.promoteacceptance.samhsa.gov/>
- Bring Change 2 Mind: <http://bringchange2mind.org>

Campus Resources

Office of Student Accessibility Services

If you have a physical, mental or learning disability, either hidden or visible, which may require classroom, test-taking, or other reasonable modifications, please see me as soon as possible. If you have not already done so, please be sure to register with the Office of Student Accessibility Services. You can do so by going to the Office of Student Accessibility Services, which is located in Crozier Williams, Room 221, or by contacting the Office at 860-439-5240 or 860-439-5428, or by email

Academic Resource Center

The Academic Resource Center (ARC) offers services to support your academic work such as study skills workshops, time management, coaching and tutoring. All services are free of charge. ARC offices are located in Main Street West, The Plex. Please visit or call 860-439-5294 for information or to schedule an appointment.

The Roth Writing Center

The Roth Writing Center provides one-to-one peer tutoring (free of charge) to help student writers of all abilities during all stages of the writing process. To make an appointment, call 860-439-2173 or stop by the Writing Center at 214 Blaustein. If you're a confident, experienced writer the Writing Center can help you to push your ideas and polish your style; if you're a relatively inexperienced and not-so-confident writer the Writing Center can also help you, by working on grammar or organization or whatever you need. Writing Center tutors are trained to help you to discover what you think through writing. Working with a tutor gives you the opportunity to share your work-in-progress with an actual reader, so that you can get useful feedback on that work *before* you have to turn it in for a final grade. For further information, visit the Writing Center web page at <http://write.conncoll.edu/>.

Title IX Confidentiality/Mandated Reporter Statement

It is important for you to know that all faculty members are mandated reporters of any incidents of sexual misconduct. That means that I cannot keep information about sexual misconduct confidential if you share that information with me. Darcie Folsom, the Director of Sexual Violence Prevention and Advocacy, can advise you confidentially as can Counseling Services and any of the College chaplains. Darcie can also help you access other resources on campus and in the local community. You can reach Darcie at x2219 or darcie.folsom@conncoll.edu, and her office is in Cro 222.

If you are committed to the prevention of sexual assault on our campus, consider participating in *Green Dot* training, join our campus chapter of *1 in 4*, or become a member of *Safety Net*. You can find out more about these organizations on ConnQuest, at the Involvement Fair in Cro (9/8 2-4pm), or by contacting Darcie Folsom.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND IMPORTANT DATES

Important Dates:

- 2/25: Select and read article for final paper
- 3/25: Brief commentary #1 due
- 4/1: Submit hypotheses for proposed experiment
- 4/29: Brief commentary #2 due
- 5/8: Final paper due (submit electronically)

Course Schedule

1/21 – Opening

The Self

1/28 – Egocentrism

Epley, N., Converse, B. A., Delbos, A., Monteleone, G. A., & Cacioppo, J. T. (2009). Believers' estimates of God's beliefs are more egocentric than estimates of other people's beliefs. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 106(51), 21533-21538.

Epley, N., Keysar, B., Van Boven, L., & Gilovich, T. (2004). Perspective taking as egocentric anchoring and adjustment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 87(3), 327.

Gilovich, T., Medvec, V. H., & Savitsky, K. (2000). The spotlight effect in social judgment: an egocentric bias in estimates of the salience of one's own actions and appearance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78(2), 211.

2/4 – Self-enhancement

Brown, J. D., & Han, A. (2012). My better half: Partner enhancement as self-enhancement. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 3(4), 479.

Paulhus, D. L., Harms, P. D., Bruce, M. N., & Lysy, D. C. (2003). The over-claiming technique: measuring self-enhancement independent of ability. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84, 890.

Pronin, E., Lin, D. Y., & Ross, L. (2002). The bias blind spot: Perceptions of bias in self versus others. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 28, 369.

2/11 – Differentiation and Uniqueness

Ariely, D., & Levav, J. (2000). Sequential choice in group settings: Taking the road less traveled and less enjoyed. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 27, 279. doi:10.1086/jcr.2000.27.issue-3

Kim, S. H., Vincent, L. C., & Goncalo, J. A. (2013). Outside advantage: Can social rejection fuel creative thought? *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 142, 605.

Lee, S. Y., Gregg, A. P., & Park, S. H. (2013). The person in the purchase: Narcissistic consumers prefer products that positively distinguish them. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 105, 335.

2/18 – Decision making biases

Van Boven, L., Dunning, D., & Loewenstein, G. (2000). Egocentric empathy gaps between owners and buyers: misperceptions of the endowment effect. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 79(1), 66.

Marks, M. J., & Fraley, R. C. (2006). Confirmation bias and the sexual double standard. *Sex Roles*, 54, 19.

Jones, J. T., Pelham, B. W., Carvallo, M., & Mirenberg, M. C. (2004). How do I love thee? Let me count the Js: implicit egotism and interpersonal attraction. *Journal Of Personality and Social Psychology*, 87(5), 665.

2/25 – NO CLASS - Find, choose, and read a paper for your experiment proposal.

Game Theory

3/4 – Game Theory and the Rational-Actor Model

Camerer, C. (1999). Behavioral economics: Reunifying psychology and economics. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 96(19), 10575. **(NOTE: Patrick will present this paper.)**

Charness, G., & Gneezy, U. (2008). What's in a name? Anonymity and social distance in dictator and ultimatum games. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 68, 29.

3/11 - NO CLASS (spring break)

3/18 - NO CLASS (spring break)

3/25 – Cooperation, defection, and punishment – First brief commentary due.

Hamlin, J. K., & Wynn, K. (2011). Young infants prefer prosocial to antisocial others. *Cognitive development*, 26(1), 30.

Herrmann, B., Thöni, C., & Gächter, S. (2008). Antisocial punishment across societies. *Science*, 319(5868), 1362.

Fehr, E., & Gächter, S. (2002). Altruistic punishment in humans. *Nature*, 415(6868), 137.

4/1 – Trust – Submit hypotheses for experiment/final paper

Wilson, R. K., & Eckel, C. C. (2006). Judging a book by its cover: Beauty and expectations in the trust game. *Political Research Quarterly*, 59(2), 189.

Kosfeld, M., Heinrichs, M., Zak, P. J., Fischbacher, U., & Fehr, E. (2005). Oxytocin increases trust in humans. *Nature*, 435(7042), 673.

Evans, A. M., Athenstaedt, U., & Krueger, J. I. (2013). The development of trust and altruism during childhood. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 36, 82.

Morality

4/8 – Cultural evolution

Buss, D. M., Shackelford, T. K., Kirkpatrick, L. A., & Larsen, R. J. (2001). A half century of mate preferences: The cultural evolution of values. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 63(2), 491.

Haidt, J. (2001). The emotional dog and its rational tail: a social intuitionist approach to moral judgment. *Psychological Review*, 108(4), 814.

Henrich, J., Ensminger, J., McElreath, R., Barr, A., Barrett, C., Bolyanatz, A., ... & Ziker, J. (2010). Markets, religion, community size, and the evolution of fairness and punishment. *Science*, 327(5972), 1480.

4/15 – Deception and self-deception

Batson, C. D., Thompson, E. R., Seufferling, G., Whitney, H., & Strongman, J. A. (1999). Moral hypocrisy: appearing moral to oneself without being so. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 77(3), 525.

Mazar, N., Amir, O., & Ariely, D. (2008). The dishonesty of honest people: A theory of self-concept maintenance. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 45(6), 633.

Gino, F., & Ariely, D. (2012). The dark side of creativity: original thinkers can be more dishonest. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 102(3), 445.

4/22 – Political orientation

Graham, J., Haidt, J., & Nosek, B. A. (2009). Liberals and conservatives rely on different sets of moral foundations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 96*(5), 1029.

Napier, J. L., & Jost, J. T. (2008). Why are conservatives happier than liberals? *Psychological Science, 19*(6), 565.

Helzer, E. G., & Pizarro, D. A. (2011). Dirty liberals! Reminders of physical cleanliness influence moral and political attitudes. *Psychological Science, 22*(4), 517.

4/29 – Happiness – second brief commentary due

Mitchell, L., Frank, M. R., Harris, K. D., Dodds, P. S., & Danforth, C. M. (2013). The geography of happiness: Connecting Twitter sentiment and expression, demographics, and objective characteristics of place. *PloS one, 8*(5), e64417.

Brickman, P., Coates, D., & Janoff-Bulman, R. (1978). Lottery winners and accident victims: Is happiness relative?. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 36*(8), 917.

Kraft, T. L., & Pressman, S. D. (2012). Grin and bear it: The influence of manipulated facial expression on the stress response. *Psychological Science, 23*(11), 1372.

5/6 – Last presentation, final paper presentations, closing

Mauss, I. B., Tamir, M., Anderson, C. L., & Savino, N. S. (2011). Can seeking happiness make people unhappy? Paradoxical effects of valuing happiness. *Emotion, 11*(4), 807.

5/8 – Final paper due (electronic submission)