

MGV 490A-1: Decision Making

Instructor: Professor Stephen Garcia

Dates/Times: Friday, June 23, 2025: 1:30 pm – 4:30 pm
Saturday, June 24, 2025: 9:30 am -12:30 pm, 1:30 – 4:30 pm
Sunday, June 25, 2025: 9:30 am – 12:30 pm

Class Format: In-person lectures, discussions, group discussions, activities

Course Description

Decision making is a constant task in everyday life, yet decision making is especially important in organizations as our decisions not only affect us but they also affect other members of the organization, the broader organization, outside stakeholders, and more. This course thus seeks to provide an overview of decision-making from a psychological and behavioral decision theory perspective. The content of this course relies heavily on well-established basic research, as students will learn the basics of a variety of decision and cognitive biases as well as the basics of cognition and information processing. Although many of the decision processes and mechanisms that we learn apply to many different domains, the class sessions will focus on four domains of decision making: (i) risk and decision making, (ii) persuasion and decision making, (iii) ethical decision making, and (iv) well-being and decision making. In concert with the lectures and interactive discussions, together we will learn how these various decision processes and phenomena apply to our workplace experiences and how they can inform initiatives to improve decision processes.

Grading Requirements

- Pre-Work Reflection Essays (4 in total, 250 words each): 40%
 - Based on the readings below for each of the four sessions, write a reflection about the key concepts that you learned from the readings, and then apply them to organizational experiences, organizational problems, or some other workplace or personal application. Instead, or in addition, you may also pose questions about how the concepts in the readings may apply to or dovetail with other content that you have obtained in your coursework, or you may pose questions that will help further our understanding of the boundary conditions of the concepts (i.e., when they apply, when they do not).
- Attendance, Participation, In-Class Activities: 40%
- Final Quiz: 20%

Required Book:

PREDICTABLY IRRATIONAL : THE HIDDEN FORCES THAT SHAPE OUR DECISIONS by Dan Ariely (2010 Edition or later --- This book is widely available online and many brick & mortar bookstores – if different edition, the chapter number may differ but the chapter title should remain the same)

Participation and Discussion Guidelines

We promote an atmosphere for learning	We treat each other with respect	We take care of ourselves	We make space to reframe/reset/revise our comments
We are present	We actively listen	The Learning Leaves: Our personal experiences stay here	New additions?

In general, students should adhere to the **UC Davis Principles of Community**:

The University of California, Davis, is first and foremost an institution of learning and teaching, committed to serving the needs of society. Our campus community reflects and is a part of a society comprising all races, creeds and social circumstances. The successful conduct of the university's affairs requires that every member of the university community acknowledge and practice the following basic principles:

We affirm the inherent dignity in all of us, and we strive to maintain a climate of justice marked by respect for each other. We acknowledge that our society carries within it historical and deep-rooted misunderstandings and biases, and therefore we will endeavor to foster mutual understanding among the many parts of our whole.

We affirm the right of freedom of expression within our community and affirm our commitment to the highest standards of civility and decency towards all. We recognize the right of every individual to think and speak as dictated by personal belief, to express any idea, and to disagree with or counter another's point of view, limited only by university regulations governing time, place and manner. We promote open expression of our individuality and our diversity within the bounds of courtesy, sensitivity and respect.

We confront and reject all manifestations of discrimination, including those based on race, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, religious or political beliefs, status within or outside the university, or any of the other differences among people which have been excuses for misunderstanding, dissension or hatred. We recognize and cherish the richness contributed to our lives by our diversity. We take pride in our various achievements, and we celebrate our differences.

We recognize that each of us has an obligation to the community of which we have chosen to be a part. We will strive to build a true community of spirit and purpose based on mutual respect and caring.

Also please preview the **UC Davis Code of Academic Conduct**:

<http://sja.ucdavis.edu/files/cac.pdf>

Session I: Risk and Decision Making

Readings:

Chapter 2: The fallacy of supply and demand : Why the price of pearls, and everything else, is up in the air

Chapter 6: The influence of arousal : Why hot is much hotter than we realize

Reflection Essay: Due Prior to Class Session

Session II: Persuasion and Decision Making

Readings:

Chapter 3: The cost of zero cost : Why we often pay too much when we pay nothing

Chapter 10. The effect of expectations: Why the mind Gets What It Expects

Chapter 11: The power of price : Why a 50-cent aspirin can do what a penny aspirin can't

Reflection Essay: Due Prior to Class Session

Session III: Ethical Decision Making

Readings:

Chapter 13: The context of our character, Part I

Chapter 14: The context of our character, Part II

Reflection Essay: Due Prior to Class Session

Session IV: Decision Making and Well-Being

Readings:

Chapter 4: The cost of social norms : Why we are happy to do things, but not when we are paid to do them

Chapter 7: The problem of procrastination and self-control : Why we can't make ourselves do what we want to do

Reflection Essay: Due Prior to Class Session