# THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

## JOHN GLENN COLLEGE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

**PUB AFRS 4010** (5468)
**Public Affairs Decision Making**
**3 credit hours**
**Autumn 2015**

**W**ednesdays & Fridays, 2.20pm – 3.40pm
Mendenhall Lab 0115

| | |
|---|---|
| **Instructor** | Lisa A. Frazier, Doctoral Candidate & Instructor |
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## COURSE OVERVIEW

Decision making is fundamental to human activity. Individuals and groups make decisions for both personal and organizational purposes. Behavioral scientists from economics, psychology, sociology, and management have studied the way in which individuals and groups make decisions under various conditions. Scholars in mathematics, computer science, and machine learning have studied the computational properties and applications of decision processes. Both families of research provide important insights for public administration, where interest in decision making is motivated by pragmatic concerns of policy and management, rather than a conceptual understanding of the decision making process itself.

Public affairs decisions are made in the context of imperfect information; uncertain events, conditions, and outcomes; and conflicts over values. Yet despite these challenges, decisions must be made in order to meet a wide range of societal objectives. A diverse set of models and methods can be used to analyze and guide decisions in operational, managerial, and policy settings. In this course, we will cover major topics and insights from the decision sciences. Specifically, we will consider:
- The problems we face and the decisions we make in public policy and public management
- The value of models in decision making and what makes a "good" decision
- Challenges in decision making and modeling decisions

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- Major types of models and their associated methods in decision making
- Applications of decision making models and methods in policy and management settings
- Current issues and the future of administrative decision making in the public sector

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

There are three core learning objectives for this course:
- o Understand decision making from a theoretical and practical perspective
- o Be familiar with techniques for making decisions in the public sector
- o Understand how to use information and values to aid in decision making

Course learning objectives are pursued via podcasts, lectures, class activities and discussion, and readings. Student understanding of decision analysis concepts and methods is assessed by items on two exams, six homework assignments (problem sets and short essays), and various class activities.

## BASIS FOR ASSESSMENT

Your grades will be based on the following exams and activities:

*Midterm Exam* (20%; Wednesday, October 14, regular class time)
> The midterm will cover key concepts and skills from the first seven weeks of the course. Format will include multiple choice, short answer, and essay responses.

*Final Exam* (30%; Wednesday, Dec 16, 12pm-1.45pm)
> The final exam will be comprehensive, though the emphasis will be on concepts and skills covered since the midterm. Format will include short answer and essay responses.

**I do not administer make-up exams.**

*Homework Assignments* (35%; 6 assignments)
> Homework assignments will provide an important opportunity for you to problem solve, work with classmates, and develop your decision making skills. You will submit your assignments through the Carmen dropbox.
> Detailed prompts and grading rubrics will be provided upon assignment.

*Participation* (15%; attendance, engagement, and contributions to class exercises)
> Your participation in class discussions and group exercises is imperative to doing well in this course. As we shall discover during the course, collaboration will increase your understanding of the material and ability to problem solve.

**Formatting requirements for all written assignments:** Microsoft Word Document; Double-spaced, 12-point font, 1 inch margins, and include page numbers.

**Assignment Schedule**

| Assignment | Due Date |
|---|---|
| Homework #1 | Friday, September 18 |
| Homework #2 | Wednesday, September 30 |
| Midterm Exam | Wednesday, October 14 |
| Homework #3 | Wednesday, October 28 |
| Homework #4 | Friday, November 6 |
| Homework #5 | Friday, November 20 |
| Homework #6 | Friday, December 4 |
| Final Exam | Wednesday, December 16 |

**Grade Appeals**

Grades on assignments are intended to reflect the overall quality of performance of the student. You may appeal your grade on an assignment if you think the grade does not reflect the quality of your performance on the assignment. To appeal a grade, submit a clear written explanation describing why you believe the assigned grade is inappropriate within one week after your work is returned. You must cite specific components of the rubric for the given assignment. I will carefully consider all such appeals. If I re-grade the assignment, I will re-grade the *entire* assignment. As a result, the final grade for the re-graded assignment may be greater than, less than, or equal to the original grade.

Transformation of numerical grades to letter grades will correspond to this schedule:

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | 93-100 | C+ | 77-79.9 | E | 59.9 and below |
| A- | 90-92.9 | C | 73-76.9 | | |
| B+ | 87-89.9 | C- | 70-72.9 | | |
| B | 83-86.9 | D+ | 67-69.9 | | |
| B- | 80-82.9 | D | 60-66.9 | | |

## TEXTS

There are **two required** texts for this course:

Stone, D. (2012). *Policy Paradox: The art of political decision making, 3rd ed.* New York, NY: WW Norton & Company, Inc. [ISBN-13: 978-0393912722  ISBN-10: 0393912728]

* 2nd edition also acceptable; students are responsible for determining equivalent page numbers and chapters for assigned reading.

Hammon, J.S., Keeney, R.L., & Raiffa, H. (2002). *Smart Choices: A practical guide to making better decisions.* New York, NY: Broadway Books. [ISBN-13: 978-0767908864 ISBN-10: 0767908864]

* This book is available as an e-book through the OSU Library (for free). However, user access is limited, so plan on being an early and quick reader if you use this version.

In addition, we will be doing a number of exercises out of the following book; you may find it helpful to have:

Ammons, D.N. (2009). *Tools for Decision Making: A practical guide for local government, 2nd ed.* Washington, D.C.: CQ Press. [ISBN-13: 978-0872895973 ISBN-10: 0872895973]

Additional readings, as well as other media resources, will be posted on the Carmen course page at least one week in advance of their due date.

Students can access textbook information via the Barnes & Noble bookstore website: www.shopOhioState.com as well as from their BuckeyeLink Student Center. This information is disseminated by B&N to all area bookstores. You may buy from a store of your choice and/or shop for books (always use ISBN# for searches) on line.

# COURSE SCHEDULE

| Week | Date | Topic | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | **Wed   Aug 26** | Introduction to the course | |
| | **Fri   Aug 28** | What decisions we're making in Public Affairs: Problems in policy and management | PP: Introduction<br>HKR: Chap 1 |
| **2** | **Wed   Sept 2** | Why model decision making? | PP: Chap 1<br>Epstein*<br>WTP: 0.00, 0.01 |
| | **Fri   Sept 4** | What makes a "good" decision? | HKR: Chap 2 |
| **3** | **Wed   Sept 9** | Rational models of decision making: Assumptions | HKR: Chap 3-6 |
| | **Fri   Sept 11** | Rational models: Types and methods, HW#1 assigned | PM: #363<br>Ammons: Chap 12-14* |
| **4** | **Wed   Sept 16** | Limits on rationality: Uncertainty | HKR: Chap 7<br>PM #645 |
| | **Fri   Sept 18** | Limits on rationality: Cognitive and social heuristics and biases | **HW#1 due**<br>HKR: Chap 8, 10 |
| **5** | **Wed   Sept 23** | Limits on rationality: Class exercises, HW#2 assigned | Khaneman & Tversky*<br>Gigerenzer* |
| | **Fri   Sept 25** | Limits on rationality: Resources, objectives | PP: Chap 2-6 |
| **6** | **Wed   Sept 30** | Behavioral & rule-based models: Assumptions | **HW#2 due** |
| | **Fri   Oct 2** | Behavioral & rule-based models: Types and methods | HKR: Chap 9 |
| **7** | **Wed   Oct 7** | Behavioral & rule-based models: Bayes' Rule | TBD |
| | **Fri   Oct 9** | Behavioral & rule-based models: Class exercises, HW #3 assigned | Review heuristics and biases, Bayes' Rule |
| **8** | **Wed   Oct 14** | Midterm Exam | |
| | **Fri   Oct 16** | *Fall Break — No Class* | |
| **9** | **Wed   Oct 21** | Participatory models: Assumptions | PP: Chap 7-11<br>PM: #372 |
| | **Fri   Oct 23** | Participatory models: Types and methods | Zeckhauser/Suroweicki*<br>Lerner & Tetlock*<br>WTP: 0.02 |

## COURSE SCHEDULE

| Week | Date | Topic | Readings/Media |
|------|------|-------|----------------|
| | | | PM: #644 |
| 10 | Wed Oct 28 | Participatory models: Special considerations | **HW#3 due** PM: #611 |
| | Fri Oct 30 | Participatory models: Class exercises, HW#4 assigned | PP: Chap 12-16 |
| 11 | Wed Nov 4 | Data use, big data management, and privacy in the public sector | PM: #625, 626 WTP: 0.06 |
| | Fri Nov 6 | Applied Decision Analysis, task planning & monitoring | **HW#4 due** |
| 12 | Wed Nov 11 | *Veterans Day — No Class* | |
| | Fri Nov 13 | Organizational performance & assessment, HW#5 assigned | TBD |
| 13 | Wed Nov 18 | Staffing, intervention, and termination | TBD |
| | Fri Nov 20 | Privatization decisions and "go away costs", HW#6 assigned | **HW#5 due** |
| 14 | Wed Nov 25 | *Thanksgiving Break — No Class* | |
| | Fri Nov 27 | *Thanksgiving Break — No Class* | |
| 15 | Wed Dec 2 | Framing problems, options, consequences, and accounting for the way people are | Invisibilia: The power of categories* PM: #638, 642 |
| | Fri Dec 4 | Lingering questions and the future of decision sciences in PA | **HW#6 due** |
| 16 | Wed Dec 9 | Wrapping up: Flexibility, creativity, and adaptation | HKR: Chap 11 PP: Conclusion |
| | Wed Dec 16 12-1.45pm | Final Exam | |

**\***Carmen item
PP = *Policy Paradox*, Stone (2012)
HKR = Hammon, Keeney, & Raiffa (2002), *Smart Choices*
WTP = *What's the Point* podcast
PM = *Planet Money* podcast

## *ACADEMIC INTEGRITY & ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT*

From http://oaa.osu.edu/coamfaqs.html#academicmisconductstatement

The Ohio State University and the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM) expect that all students have read and understand the University's *Code of Student Conduct*, and that all students will complete all academic and scholarly assignments with fairness and honesty. Failure to follow the rules and guidelines established in the University's *Code of Student Conduct* may constitute "Academic Misconduct." Sanctions for misconduct could include a failing grade in this course and suspension or dismissal from the University.

In the Ohio State University's *Code of Student Conduct*, Section 3335-23-04 defines academic misconduct as: "Any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the University, or subvert the educational process." Examples of academic misconduct include (but are not limited to) plagiarism, collusion (unauthorized collaboration), copying the work of another student, and possession of unauthorized materials during an examination. Ignorance of the University's *Code of Conduct* is never considered an "excuse" for academic misconduct.

Other sources of information on academic misconduct to which you may refer:
  The Committee on Academic Misconduct web page http://oaa.osu.edu/coam.html
  *Ten Suggestions for Preserving Academic Integrity* http://oaa.osu.edu/coamtensuggestions.html
  *Eight Cardinal Rules of Academic Integrity* www.northwestern.edu/uacc/8cards.html

If you have any questions about the above policy or what constitutes academic misconduct in this course, please contact me.


## *MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES*

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating, and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities.

The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. If you or someone you know are suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the **Office of Student Life Counseling and Consultation Services (CCS) by visiting ccs.osu.edu or calling 614-292- 5766. CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 4th Floor of the PAES Building. 24 hour emergency help is also available through the National 24/7 Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK or at suicidepreventionlifeline.org.**

*ADA ACCOMMODATIONS*

Students with disability that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/.