School: Baruch Ivcher School of Psychology

The Psychology of Irrational Decisions

Lecturer:
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Course No.:
8076

Course Type:
Seminar

Weekly Hours:
4

Credit:
4

Course Requirements:
Final Paper

Group Code:
150807601

Language:
English

Prerequisites

Prerequisite:
8000 - Introduction To Psychology
8004 - Introduction To Statistics
8014 - Research and Measurement Methods
8015 - Multivariate Statistics

Course Description

Semester A: Sunday, 10:15 - 11:45 | Room: A323
Semester B: Wednesday, 10:45 - 12:15 | Room: Lab S4 (Library)

We all believe that we generally making ethical and rational decisions in our everyday lives, but do we? This seminar is focused on the tension between the perceptions we have of ourselves as being honest and rational and the actual decisions we make, shaped by psychological intuitions and self-interests. Students will be introduced to behavioral research which reflects upon this tension in different domains including: dishonest behavior, cheating detection and moral judgment making. Building on this theoretical background, students will work in pairs to develop original research projects. This process includes developing a proposal, running an empirical study, and writing a full research paper.

Course Agenda:

1/ Introduction to Irrational Decision-Making
2/ Honest Individuals and Dishonest Behaviours
3/ Dishonesty and Moral Judgments in Groups
4/ Altruistic Cheating
5/ Moral Judgments and Justifications
6/ Moral Regulation and Dishonest Behavior

Course Goals

By the end of the course students will have a strong general knowledge of unethical decision making in research and a deeper knowledge of their chosen research subtopic. Students will have demonstrated their ability to work in groups to design an empirical hypothesis and accompanying experimental design. They will demonstrate their ability to test their hypothesis by experimental design, collect the data in an organized and scientific fashion and interpret their results. They will also go through the process of writing a full academic research paper in accordance with APA guidelines.

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The first semester will be devoted to designing the project and writing a research proposal which will include the following sections: introduction/literature review, method and predicted results. During the second semester you will be expected to collect original data according to your proposal, analyze the data and write a final research paper in accordance with APA guidelines. Throughout the year, each pair will be expected to give at three presentations (detailed below).

SEMESTER A

During the first three meetings, we will meet as a group for three introductory lectures. Then, in the next three classes each of the pairs will review one paper (this is the first
presentation you will be responsible for preparing as a research team). These meetings will be devoted to gaining a general introduction to the topics which will help you to conceptualize the research question you will focus on.

Before the end of the first semester, we will meet as a group for each team to present their research proposals. From the 7th to the 11th week of the semester, you will be expected to schedule individual meetings for your team with the lecturer and teaching assistant. It is your responsibility to set up these meetings as well as come prepared with questions about the project. You are expected to meet with the teaching assistant or the lecturer at least 2 times during this period. During the last 2 weeks of the semester, we will convene again as a group for class presentations where each group will share their research proposal (this is the 2nd presentation your group will be responsible for).

**SEMESTER B**

Your final research proposal (including the introduction/literature review, method and predicted results) will need to be submitted up until the 3rd week of the mid-year break. Upon receiving final approval from the lecturer on your proposal, the second semester will be devoted to conducting your experiment, analyzing and interpreting your results and writing your final research paper. While the class does not meet each week, each group is expected to hold individual meetings with the lecturer and teaching assistant. As in the first semester, it is your responsibility to set up these meetings as well as come prepared with questions about the project. You are expected to meet with the teaching assistant or the lecturer at least 4 times during the second semester. Toward the middle of the semester we will have two sessions together as a group to discuss one another's process and findings (these dates will be announced at the beginning of Semester B). We will meet as a group for the last two class sessions of the 2nd semester for each group to present their research findings and conclusions (this is the 3rd presentation your group is responsible for). The final research paper will be due after the final exam period.

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**Grading**

- Final paper – 70%- grade will be based on quality of research, quality of writing, and level of understanding of the theoretical background and as well as of the empirical findings. The quality of the first semester report will also be taken into account. In addition, your dedication and investments in the project will be taken into account in the final paper score.
- Presentations – 30% (10% for each presentation.)

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**Lecturer Office Hours**
Additional Notes

Final paper submission instructions:

The final paper will be in the form of original research manuscript according to the APA style guidelines. It should be 15-20 page (double spaced) not including title, abstract, references and appendices. The abstract section should be between 130–200 words.

Reading List

Mandatory Reading

1/ Introduction to Irrational Decisions (read after 1st class)


2/ Honest Individuals and Dishonest Behaviors (read after 2nd class)


3/ Dishonesty and Moral Judgments in Groups (after 3rd class)


Papers for class presentations:

4th Class – Altruistic Cheating


5th Class – Moral Judgments and Justifications


6th Class – Moral Regulation and Dishonest Behavior


Additional reading according to topics:

**Topic: Rational Crime Theory**


**Topic: Everyday Lies**


**Topic: Bounded Ethicality and Norms**


**Topic: Moral Hypocrisy**


**Topic: Cheating Detection**


**Topic: Power, Social Status & Unethical Behavior**


