MAR 7588: Consumer Information Processing and Decision Making
Spring 2016

Instructor: Lyle Brenner  Office: Stuzin 267E
Phone: 392-273-3272  E-mail: lyle.brenner@warrington.ufl.edu
Website: http://bear.warrington.ufl.edu/brenner/mar7588/

Class Meetings: Tuesdays 12:50 – 3:50 PM (Periods 6-8) in Stuzin 267G.

Overview:
We will review an assortment of topics related to consumer memory, inference, prediction, judgment, and decision making. These can be thought of as “higher-order,” more complex cognitive operations. The course does not purport to offer comprehensive coverage of these topics (of course). We will address literature residing within traditionally-defined boundaries of cognitive psychology, social psychology, judgment & decision making, and consumer behavior. The main prerequisite is that you should be comfortable reading and discussing original journal articles in the behavioral sciences.

Evaluation:
Your grade in this class will be based on one paper / research proposal, several short & easy quizzes/exercises, and class participation. The breakdown is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Proportion of Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100%</td>
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Paper:
For the paper, you will develop a (hopefully viable) research project related to one or more of the topics discussed in class. This paper will involve a reasonably thorough discussion of the existing literature, proposal of sensible predictions/hypotheses and their rationales, and a more detailed exposition of your proposed methods. This paper should be no more than 7500 words in length. The paper is due on the last day of class (April 19).

Quizzes:
We will hold very short (~10 minute) quizzes most weeks on the assigned reading material. These quizzes will ask fairly simple questions about the material, primarily to insure that students stay current in their reading. *You may submit suggested questions for the quizzes (and/or for general class discussion) by 5pm on the Mondays before each class.*

Class Participation:
It is important that you prepare thoroughly for each class. You should come prepared to thoughtfully discuss each week’s set of papers. Asking relevant, thoughtful questions is also considered an important component of class participation.
Approximate Schedule (subject to change as needed)

Week 1: January 5 
Topic: Introduction, course format, etc.
- Excerpts from Abelson (1995). *Statistics as Principled Argument*

Week 2: January 12 
Topic: Inference, Reasoning, Search

Week 3: January 19 
Topic: Hypothesis Generation and Testing

More:

Week 4: January 26 
Topic: Awareness & Implicit Associations
  - and commentaries and responses

More:

Week 5: February 2 
No class (I’ll be out of town)
Week 6: February 9  
**Topic: Introspection, unconscious thought**

Week 7: February 16  
**Topic: Prediction / Heuristics & Biases I**

More:
- Superforecasters excerpt?

Week 8: February 23  
**Topic: Heuristics & Biases II: Debates**

More:

Week 9: March 1  
**no class -- SPRING BREAK**
Week 10: March 8  Topic: Dual systems, Substitution
More:

Week 11: March 15  Topic: Affective Forecasting
More:

Week 12: March 22  Topic: Answering questions; anchoring

Week 13: March 29  Topic: Framing & Construction of Preference
Week 15: April 12  
Topic: Mental Accounting, Opportunity Costs


More:

Week 16: April 19  
Discussion of Research Proposals

Collections (where many of the JDM readings can be found)
Some notes on reading and evaluating behavioral research
MAR 7588 (Brenner), Spring 2016

Different papers have different approaches and goals, so not all of the considerations below will necessarily apply. But here are some questions to ponder when reading an empirically-focused research paper.

1. **Overall**: What is/are the overall point(s) of the paper? Is the topic interesting? If so, to whom would it be of most interest? What conclusion(s) do the authors want you to take away? Are they successful in supporting those conclusions with data and/or logical argument? How might you summarize the paper’s main point in a few simple sentences?

2. **Introduction**: What earlier concepts/literature does the paper draw on? Does the paper accurately describe and characterize these concepts? Are important concepts or perspectives omitted?

3. **Hypotheses/Predictions**: Does the paper propose/test a particular hypothesis? Or perhaps pit multiple hypotheses against each other? Are any proposed hypotheses well-motivated by previous work and/or by intuition/argument/logic? Is the paper more broadly exploratory – investigating an interesting domain without a well-defined set of hypotheses or predictions?

4. **Methods**: Are the methods used appropriate for the paper’s goals? What other methods might be incrementally useful, or even superior? How would you alter the research design and what do you think would result? Are the tasks used in the studies representative of or similar to “real life” tasks, or are they very artificial or bizarre? Try imagining yourself as a participant completing these tasks – how might you react to them?

5. **Results/Analysis**: Do the authors fairly and accurately describe their data? Are appropriate descriptive and analytic methods used? Are hypothesis tests overemphasized to the detriment of conveying the main patterns in the data? Are there notable patterns in the data that the authors ignore or do not discuss sufficiently?

6. **Conclusions**: Are the paper’s conclusions justified by the results? Are they meaningful? Under what conditions do you think they hold? Are they likely to generalize broadly?