Course overview and objectives

The main goal of this course is to extend the discussion of theories and topics in consumer research provided during the course Consumer Behavior I. The weekly readings and class presentations are intended to provide a preliminary coverage of classic and current research related to judgment and decision-making (JDM). We will discuss papers published at top journals in consumer behavior, marketing, management, psychology, and economics. The course will challenge students to adopt a critical stance when reading papers.

Thus, the objectives of this course are:

- to explore JDM research and understand key concepts and ideas.
- to develop a strong foundation for critical thinking in this area and in behavioral research overall.
- to build skills in understanding, conceptualizing, operationalizing, and developing research ideas.
- to develop skills for reviewing behavioral research.

The course will last 4 weeks in total.
Preparation and in-class participation

During classes, we will discuss the assigned readings. Students must complete all of the required readings before class. There is a lot to read, so I suggest you get a head start by reading at least some of the articles this summer.

Students need to read all papers for each session. Each student will be asked to summarize one of the papers for 3-5 minutes in order to kick-off the discussion (no powerpoint presentation required). Afterwards, we will engage in a critical discussion of the paper. We will talk about the paper’s theoretical contribution, empirical evidence, as well as limitations and possibilities for future research.

Each student is encouraged to come up with a research idea and a possible way of testing it based on insights provided by any of the papers within the session. We can discuss those ideas together in class. In my experience, many papers originate from classroom discussions.

Evaluation

Class participation (presentations, ideas development and discussion): 50%
Final research paper: 50%

Research paper

Each student must write an individual research proposal formatted using the style guidelines from the Journal of Consumer Research (http://ejcr.org/newstylesheet.pdf). The paper should identify a research question within the broad domain of consumer research. The idea needs to be novel and make a clear contribution. Students need to propose ways in which the idea can be tested (i.e., discuss the procedure and measures of an experimental study testing the idea). You may choose a research question related to one of the topics discussed in class or select a different topic discussed in the literature. The research proposal should be structured like a typical academic article, including an introduction/positioning, theoretical background (literature review), and methodology. The paper will not require an empirical research, only detailed research design.

Overview of Sessions

We will discuss normative, descriptive, and prescriptive theories of decision-making. We will talk about how people make judgments about various stimuli (e.g., products, money, time, numerical values, etc.), how they evaluate alternatives, and, ultimately, how they make choices.
Session 1: Fundamental Theories & Reviews

Required readings


Additional readings


Session 2: Evaluation & Judgments

Required readings


Additional readings


Session 3: Heuristics and Biases I

Required readings


Session 4: Heuristics and Biases II

Required readings


Additional readings (Sessions 3 & 4)


Session 5: Framing & Task Effects

Required readings


Related readings


Session 6: Context Effects

Required readings


Related readings


