All other things being equal, the simplest solution is always best.
- Frederick of Occam, late 1300s, Occam’s Razor

A thing is either yes or no, it is the thinking that makes it so.
- Shakespeare, late 1500s

The greatest enemy of truth is very often not the lie – deliberate, contrived, and dishonest — but the myth – persistent, pervasive, and unrealistic.
- John F. Kennedy, early 1960s

Knowledge will forever govern ignorance. And a people who mean to be their own governors, must arm themselves with the power knowledge gives.
- James Madison, 1822

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructor:</th>
<th>Office Location:</th>
<th>Communication:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michael Bullis, Ph.D.</td>
<td>Lokey Education Building 102J</td>
<td><a href="mailto:bullism@uoregon.edu">bullism@uoregon.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sommerville-Knight Professor</td>
<td>Dept. of Educational Methodology, Policy &amp; Leadership</td>
<td>541-346-1640</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Office Hours: | |
|---------------| |
| W, 2-4 pm or by appointment. | |

OVERVIEW

We all make decisions. Some decisions are relatively minor, such as deciding where to buy coffee in the morning or where park your car, to major, life changing decisions, such as where to enroll in graduate school or who to marry. Many people believe that the way we make those decisions – from minor to major - is random or idiosyncratic. Although it is true that some decisions made some of the time by some individuals on a whim or through blind guesswork will be wildly successful, the fact is that most of the time decisions made in such a way will not be as “good” as they could be. Conversely, decision-making processes that are complex and time consuming also can be ineffective.

Over the past half-century researchers from numerous disciplines from psychology to business to the military have studied the way in which decisions are made and made effectively. This body of work has resulted in thousands of publications, from the rigorous and scientific to those based in pop-psychology with no theoretical, objective foundation. Ironically, there has been little research on how educators make decisions.
OUTCOMES

The purpose of this course is to introduce the basic concepts of evidence-based decision-making. I should emphasize that my definition of “evidence” includes both quantitative data – numbers – and the almost ineffable “feeling” (that I believe can be quantified in some form) one has when placed in so many decision-making situations.

The course introduces the basic decision-making process; students may take other with courses based on this introduction in their programs in EMPL or other departments. Classes include lectures, presentations, and discussions. Experts may present during class time. The content of their lectures and any readings they may assign will, or could, be included in the required assignments and work.

I assume that you all will read the assigned materials on a regular basis and I seldom will lecture directly from those readings. You are responsible for keeping to the schedule, reading and studying the assigned materials, participating in class discussions, and turning in assigned work on time. Please know that I will call on as many of you as possible during the term, prepared or not, to render an opinion or answer a question.

The course maintains a social science perspective by discussing (a) a theoretical framework for critical thinking and decision-making, (b) basic statistical applications specific to the decision-making process, (c) common thinking and decision-making errors, and (d) ways to involve groups in making decisions. Assignments are focused to the kind of decisions that students are, or potentially could be, required to make in their chosen profession. The most important outcome of the class will be to develop a working knowledge of how decisions are made, essentially a template to apply throughout one’s professional career and life on various, yet-to-be-known issues and problems.

PREREQUISITE

The prerequisite for the class is EDUC 614 – Educational Statistics I (4) or the equivalent introductory statistics course, which could be taken concurrently. It would be advantageous also to have completed EDUC 611 - Survey of Education Research Design (4) and EDLD 560 – Educational Measurement, or their equivalents. I do assume that students in the class have a working knowledge of basic statistics. I will discuss multiple regression as it pertains to decision-making, cut scores, and the analysis of decisions in terms of the 2 x 2 table, but my treatment of those issues is decidedly conceptual.

This course is designed for graduate students, and likely will attract students beginning their graduate programs to those advanced students who are nearing completion of their degrees. The greatest challenge a new graduate student probably will face in the class will rest in understanding how to apply the material covered in class to the professional setting and demands.
REQUIRED READING MATERIALS

There is no text for the class. Instead, I have decided to assign specific articles and
chapters relative to the different topics. Readings required for specific classes are listed
after the class schedule. At the end of this syllabus, I also include a list of recommended
readings and movies that carry decision-making themes that I have either read or seen
over the years. I believe all are informative and, generally, entertaining.

I will try to have guest speakers come into class to talk about situations in which they
have addressed challenging situations and the way they went about making decisions
related to those situations. It is possible that the guest speakers will assign additional,
required readings.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS, ASSIGNMENTS, & READINGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>ASSIGNMENT</th>
<th>READING*</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Course Overview</td>
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<td>Syllabus</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Decision-making Models</td>
<td>Assignment 1</td>
<td>Readings</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Thinking Errors</td>
<td>Assignment 2</td>
<td>Readings</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mapping the Decision-making Process</td>
<td>Assignment 3</td>
<td>Readings</td>
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<td>Project Topic</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Defining the Problem</td>
<td>Assignment 4</td>
<td>Readings</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Gathering Data/Group Decision-making</td>
<td>Assignment 5</td>
<td>Readings</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Expert Decision-making/Instruction</td>
<td>Assignment 6</td>
<td>Readings</td>
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<td>Paper Draft</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>Assignment 7</td>
<td>Readings</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Cross Categorical Analysis</td>
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<td>Readings</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Presentations I</td>
<td>Assignment 8</td>
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<td>Final Project – Presentations</td>
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<td>Final</td>
<td>Presentations II</td>
<td>Final Project –</td>
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<td>Final Paper</td>
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</table>

✓ Required readings for each class listed below.

When accessing readings from an off-campus site, be sure to use VPN:

http://library.uoregon.edu/systems/connect-offcampus.html
Class 2

Link: http://psycnet.apa.org/journals/amp/37/7/747.pdf

doi:10.1037/h0031360

doi:10.1007/BF01321377

Class 3


doi:10.1126/science.185.4157.1124
Link: http://dx.doi.org/10.1126/science.185.4157.1124
Class 4


Available at Knight Library 2nd-4th Floor (RC467 .C87 )


Link: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/jclp.20179](http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/jclp.20179)

Class 5


doi:10.1080/00461527809529193


*Link:*  
http://search.proquest.com/docview/201100222/fulltextPDF?accountid=14698


*Link:*  
http://search.proquest.com/docview/218327643/fulltextPDF/A10586E6ADFB48AEPQ/1?accountid=14698


**Class 7**


Link: [http://psycnet.apa.org/journals/amp/64/6/515.html](http://psycnet.apa.org/journals/amp/64/6/515.html)


Link: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0001-8791(82)90042-2](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0001-8791(82)90042-2)

Link: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/BF01185967](http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/BF01185967)

*Class 8*


doi:10.1037/0003-066X.34.7.571

Link: [http://psycnet.apa.org/journals/amp/34/7/571.pdf](http://psycnet.apa.org/journals/amp/34/7/571.pdf)


doi:10.1037/0022-0167.34.4.372


*Class 9*


Available at Knight Library 2nd-4th Floor (BF698.4 .W53 1973)

**ASSIGNMENTS**

Because class-time is limited, students will complete eight homework assignments outside of class time. Those assignments are designed to reward you for reading the assigned articles and largely are composed of objective items. Some of the questions, however, call for you to respond with an opinion or to describe a study regarding how
you would apply a decision-making rule or tool to a problem. When I ask you to respond to a question in the space provided, you may neatly hand write your answer. When I ask you to respond to a question on a separate page, the response must be typed. The number of points for each assignment varies; in total, the homework assignments are worth roughly 200+ points.

Assignments are due on the dates specified in the syllabus and cannot be turned in by another student or submitted electronically. Please see the course policy statements related to this point.

I will provide paper copies of the assignments during class and place the electronic version of each assignment on the course’s blackboard site. I will try to devote some class time for assignments to be discussed.

**DECISION-MAKING PROJECT**

Each student will develop a decision-making project composed of two parts: (a) a no longer than 7-page paper and (b) a no longer than 15-minute ppt presentation composed of no more than 15 ppt slides. The idea for the project will be based on each student’s interests and must reflect a real-life situation that has occurred in each student’s actual, or likely future, career placement.

The paper is to be typed (12-point font and 1” margins) and conform to APA style. The one deviation from APA style I will allow is that you may single-space the paper. The paper will be due during the day and time scheduled for the final.

All other students will critique each student’s ppt presentation by completing the grading template; that aggregated feedback will be provided to each student. Each student will present their respective ppt during class 10 or during the day/time scheduled for the final examination for the course. This schedule for the presentations will, of course, depend upon the number of students taking the class – something I simply don’t know as this course has not been taught in previously.

Students will receive grades for both the paper and the ppt presentation. The paper is worth 50-points, an A grade will receive 50-points, a B will receive 40-points, and a No Pass will receive 30-points. The ppt is worth 25-points, an A grade will receive 25-points, a B will receive 20-points, and a No Pass will receive 15-points.

Depending upon the number of students enrolled in the course, I will either (a) meet individually with each student regarding their respective project or (b) discuss each section generally in class and answer individual questions. The major sections of the paper are as follows:

1. Description of the issue/problem to be addressed.
2. How did you identify that issue/problem (e.g., personal experience, interview with an administrator), reading?
3. What is the history of the issue/problem (e.g., describe the situation surrounding the issue/problem)?
4. Who was responsible for addressing the situation? What other individuals were involved in the situation?
5. What steps were taken to resolve, or attempt to resolve, the issue/problem (be sure to describe how you identified the steps – e.g., interview, reading, etc.)?
6. Was the issue/problem resolved successfully? How and why or why not?
7. What would you have done differently to address the issue/problem? Be sure to include problem definition, generation of alternatives, data used or that should have been used, group involvement in the issue/challenge, etc.

**GRADING GUIDELINES**

The final grade for this course will be determined based on the total points you earn in the course of the class. I will use the following standards in assigning grades, please note that in graduate school a grade lower than a B is assigned a No Pass.

A = 90% to 100%
B = 80% to 90%
No Pass = less than 80%

I reserve the right to modify this grading plan should circumstances and reason indicate a need to do so.

**INCOMPLETES**

The assignment of an INCOMPLETE or "I" grade is discouraged and will be used only in cases of extreme emergencies where satisfactory progress has been demonstrated and a passing grade may be earned. Should an "I" grade be required, students should notify me at the time such circumstances exist. Upon notification, a course completion contract must be developed and approved by week 9 of the term.

**POLICIES**

**Attendance**

Attendance is necessary to succeed in this course and master the course material. Please note that although I will not take attendance, but the only way to receive credit for assignments and the project is to turn them in or complete the activity “in vivo” during designated class time. I will, however, allow late work that conforms to the policy described below.
Assignments and Project

Assignments must be turned in the class period designated as the due date for the particular assignment. I will let you know during class when the assignment can be turned in. Assignments may NOT be turned in by other students or electronically. Project presentations will be scheduled during the first half of the term and all students will present either in Class 10 or during the time scheduled for the final. The accompanying written paper will be due during the class scheduled for the final.

Late Work

Students must contact me no later than the day prior to the day of the class in case of illness or emergencies that preclude attending class sessions, turning in homework, or taking tests as scheduled. Merely telling me that you will not be able to attend class does not guarantee that late work will be accepted, we must come to a mutual agreement regarding the work that will be completed.

My agreement to accept late work must be confirmed in writing and a date by which the work is to be completed must be agreed upon; an e-mail record between you and me will suffice for this purpose. If no prior arrangements have been made and/or a written agreement is not in place, the assignment in question will be graded down and may be assigned the grade of 0.

Academic Misconduct Policy

All students are subject to the UO Student Conduct Code:
http://studentlife.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/StudentConductCode/tabid/69/Default.aspx

This code represents a compilation of important regulations, policies, and procedures pertaining to student life. It is intended to inform students of their rights and responsibilities during their association with this institution, and to provide general guidance for enforcing those regulations and policies essential to the educational and research missions of the University.

Conflict Resolution

Several options, both informal and formal, are available to resolve conflicts for students who believe they have been subjected to or have witnessed bias, unfairness, or other improper treatment. It is important to exhaust the administrative remedies available to you including discussing the conflict with the specific individual, or seeking assistance from the course instructor, the EMPL department head or the COE associate dean.

Outside the college, you may contact:
UO Bias Response Team: 541-346-1139 or http://bias.uoregon.edu/whatbrt.htm
Diversity

It is the policy of the University of Oregon and the College of Education to support and value diversity. To do so requires that we as a college and class:
- respect the dignity and essential worth of all individuals;
- promote a culture of respect throughout the University community;
- respect the privacy, property, and freedom of others;
- reject bigotry, discrimination, violence, or intimidation of any kind;
- practice personal and academic integrity and expect it from others; and
- promote the diversity of opinions, ideas, and backgrounds that are the lifeblood of the university.

Documented Disability

I will provide appropriate accommodations for students with documented disabilities. If you have a documented disability and require accommodation, arrange to meet with me by the end of week 2 of the term. The documentation of your disability must come in writing from the Disability Services in the Office of Academic Advising and Student Services. For more information on Disability Services, please see http://ds.uoregon.edu/

Expected Classroom Behavior

- Participate in class activities.
- Respect the diversity of cultures, opinions, and viewpoint in the classroom.
- Listen to other students, professors, and lecturers with respect.
- Arrive on time, prepared for class.
- Do not use your phone or laptop during class time to access personal or work contacts and/or correspondence.
- Racist, homophobic, sexist, and other disrespectful comments will not be tolerated.

Respect For Diversity And Appropriate Language

People with disabilities or elements of diversity are first and foremost individual people who should be treated respectfully and fairly. Language used in assignments and class discussions (written and spoken) should be respectful and professional at all times. Use "people first" language in speaking and writing about people with disabilities or other elements of diversity.
*Inclement Weather*

In the event the university operates on a curtailed schedule or closes, UO media relations will notify the Eugene-Springfield area radio and television stations as quickly as possible. In addition, a notice regarding the university’s schedule will be posted on the UO main homepage (in the “News” section) at [http://www.uoregon.edu](http://www.uoregon.edu).
SCORING TEMPLATE – DECISION-MAKING PAPER

Student: ____________________________________________________________
Tile: _______________________________________________________________

Required Elements (yes/no)
✓ Narrative between 5-7-pages _____
✓ Prepared in APA style _____
✓ All required sections are evident _____

Description of the issue/problem to be addressed. (A  B  NP)

How did you identify that issue/problem (e.g., personal experience, interview with an administrator), reading? (A  B  NP)

What is the history of the issue/problem (e.g., describe the situation surrounding the issue/problem)? (A  B  NP)

Who was responsible for addressing the situation? What other individuals were involved in the situation? (A  B  NP)

What steps were taken to resolve, or attempt to resolve, the issue/problem (be sure to describe how you identified the steps – e.g., interview, reading, etc.)? (A  B  NP)

Was the issue/problem resolved successfully? How and why or why not? (A  B  NP)

What would you have done differently to address the issue/problem? Be sure to include problem definition, generation of alternatives, data used or that should have been used, group involvement in the issue/challenge, etc. (A  B  NP)

Strengths

Areas for Improvement

Final Grade:
SCORING TEMPLATE – DECISION-MAKING PPT

Student: ____________________________________________________________

Title: _______________________________________________________________

Required Elements (yes/no)
✓ No more than 15 ppt slides _____
✓ Presentation no longer than 15-minutes _____
✓ All required sections are evident _____
✓ Appearance _____

Description of the issue/problem to be addressed. (A     B     NP)

How did you identify that issue/problem (e.g., personal experience, interview with an administrator, reading)? (A     B     NP)

What is the history of the issue/problem (e.g., describe the situation surrounding the issue/problem)? (A     B     NP)

Who was responsible for addressing the situation? What other individuals were involved in the situation? (A     B     NP)

What steps were taken to resolve, or attempt to resolve, the issue/problem (be sure to describe how you identified the steps – e.g., interview, reading, etc.)? (A     B     NP)

Was the issue/problem resolved successfully? How and why or why not? (A     B     NP)

What would you have done differently to address the issue/problem? Be sure to include problem definition, generation of alternatives, data used or that should have been used, group involvement in the issue/challenge, etc. (A     B     NP)

Strengths

Areas for Improvement

Final Grade:
RECOMMENDATIONS

Books


ISBN: 978-1-62681-226-0


**Movies**

*13 Days* – The Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, when the world stood on the brink of nuclear war and mass destruction

*Draft Day* – Deciding which player to select #1 in the National Football League’s draft of college football players

*Moneyball* – Statistical applications in America’s national game of baseball

*The Lion in Winter* – My absolute favorite movie, intrigue in the late 1100s among Henry Plantagenet, King of England, Ireland, and half of France; Henry’s estranged Queen, Eleanor of Aquitaine; their sons – Richard the Lionheart and Prince John; and King Phillip of France