

SPI 502: Psychology for Policy Analysis and Implementation

--Spring 2021--

Teaching team:

- Alin Coman (Professor Coman; he, him)
- Emily Pronin (Professor Pronin; she, her)
- Nick Buttrick (Nick; he, him)
- Britt Hadar (Britt; she, her)
- Madalina Vlasceanu (Mada; she, her)

Zoom links/Rooms by precept section:

Section 1 (Coman):

<https://princeton.zoom.us/j/91214635697>

Section 2 (Britt): Robertson Hall 016

Section 3 (Pronin):

<https://princeton.zoom.us/j/95241457136>

Meeting times:

- *Lecture*: Thursdays, 10:40am - 12:10pm
- *Precepts*: Tuesdays, 10:40am - 12:10pm

Section 4 (Nick):

<https://princeton.zoom.us/j/96271569560>

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course explores how basic concepts from behavioral research in social and cognitive psychology and judgment and decision-making can shape policy formulation and implementation. Central themes include a detailed analysis of human judgment and decision-making, and how a variety of motives and situational forces can affect people's choices, attitudes, and behavior. Combined, these topics have potentially profound implications for policy design and implementation that affect both individuals as well as the functioning of organizations. Lecture material is drawn from basic psychological research and from behaviorally-informed policy analysis. Students work with faculty and with each other to identify the relevance of the material for policy and management through weekly precepts and written assignments.

COURSE STRUCTURE

Several topics will be addressed over the course of the semester. The 80-minute lecture session will typically introduce a broad topic, or sometimes two related topics, and will be followed by precepts the next Tuesday. The lectures will be pre-recorded and uploaded in Canvas by Thursday at 10:30am. The guest speakers will give synchronous (online) lectures to allow for Q&A. We will divide into smaller sections for the Tuesday precepts. The assigned readings for each topic should be read following the Thursday session and prior to the Tuesday precept. Lecture attendance and participation in precepts are required.

Precept sections are broken into four separate groups of students that will remain the same throughout the semester. Precept sections will review and apply concepts from the previous week's lecture, and discuss assignments, case studies, and applications to policy.

<u>Schedule of Lectures and Precepts</u>	
Week 1	
Tuesday (Feb. 2)	LECTURE (Intro)+PRECEPT
Thursday (Feb. 4)	LECTURE: Behavioral Mapping: an approach to translating psychological insights into policy
Tuesday (Feb. 9)	<i>Precept</i>
Week 2	
Thursday (Feb. 11)	LECTURE: Empirical Foundations of Behavioral Science
Tuesday (Feb. 16)	<i>Precept (Assignment 1 released)</i>
Week 3	
Thursday (Feb. 18)	LECTURE: Behavioral science 1: Two systems in the mind
Saturday (Feb. 20)	<i>Assignment 1 due</i>
Tuesday (Feb. 23)	<i>Precept (Assignment 2 released)</i>
Week 4	
Thursday (Feb. 25)	LECTURE: Behavioral science 2: Prospect Theory
Saturday (Feb 27)	<i>Assignment 2 due</i>
Tuesday (March 2)	<i>Precept</i>
Week 5	
Thursday (March 4)	LECTURE: Social Judgment
Tuesday (March 9)	<i>Precept (Take home Midterm exam released)</i>
Week 6	
Thursday (March 11)	GUEST LECTURE: Eldar Shafir: The Psychology of Scarcity
Saturday (March 13)	<i>Take home exam due</i>
Tuesday (March 16)	<i>*Spring recess, no precept*</i>
Week 7	
Thursday (March 18)	LECTURE: Intergroup relations
Tuesday (March 23)	<i>Precept (Assignment 3 released)</i>
Week 8	
Thursday (March 25)	GUEST LECTURE: Kathleen Tomlin: Negotiation
Saturday (March 27)	<i>Assignment 3 due</i>
Tuesday (March 30)	<i>Precept (Assignment 4 released)</i>
Week 9	
Thursday (April 1)	GUEST LECTURE: Neil Lewis: Behavioral Insights for Building More Equitable Societies
Saturday (April 3)	<i>Assignment 4 due</i>
Tuesday (April 6)	<i>Precept (Assignment 5 released)</i>
Week 10	
Thursday (April 8)	LECTURE: Moral and political decision-making
Saturday (April 10)	<i>Assignment 5 due</i>
Tuesday (April 13)	<i>Precept</i>
Week 11	
Thursday (April 15)	GUEST LECTURE: Mindy Hernandez: Applied behavioral science
Tuesday (April 20)	<i>Final Precept</i>
Week 12	
Thursday (April 22)	LECTURE: Marketplace of ideas
Tuesday (April 27)	<i>Project Write-up due (No precept)</i>

TOPICS AND READINGS

1) **Intro + Behavioral Mapping**

1a) Introduction to Psychology for Policy Analysis

Shafir, E. (Ed.). (2012). *The behavioral foundations of public policy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Foreword & Introduction (Pages 1-9).

1b) Behavioral Mapping: an approach to translating psychological insights into policy

Datta, S., & Mullainathan, S. (2014). Behavioral design: A new approach to development policy. *Review of Income and Wealth*, 60(1), 7-35.

2) Empirical Foundation of a Behavioral Approach

Wilson, T. D. (2011). Redirect: The surprising new science of psychological change. Chapters 1 & 2 (for Chap. 1, focus on pp. 1-9)

Glennester, R., & Takavarasha, K. (2013). Running randomized evaluations: A practical guide. Chapter 2, Modules 3 & 4. Recommended: Chapter 1 & 2, depending on previous exposure.

3) Behavioral Science I: two systems in the mind

Kahneman, D. (2010). *Thinking fast and slow*, Chapters 1-3, 5, 7, and 10-15.

4) Behavioral Science II: Prospect theory

Kahneman, D. (2010). *Thinking fast and slow*, Chapters 25-29 (inclusive).

5) Social Judgment and the power of the situation

Johnson, E. J. & Goldstein, D. (2003). Do defaults save lives? *Science*, 302, 1338-1339.

Pronin, E., & Schmidt, K. (2012). Claims and denials of bias and their implications for policy (pp. 195-216). Chapter 11. In E. Shafir, Ed., *The Behavioral Foundations of Public Policy*.

6) The psychology of scarcity

Mullainathan, S., & Shafir, E. 2013. Scarcity: The New Science of Having Less and How It Defines Our Lives. NY: Henry Holt Times Books. (pp. 1-163)

(If you prefer to read less:)

Mani, A., Mullainathan, S., Shafir, E., & Zhao, J. 2013. Poverty impedes cognitive function. *Science*, vol. 341, no. 6149, pp. 976-980.

Shafir, E. (Ed.). (2012). The behavioral foundations of public policy. Chapters 16.

7) Intergroup Relations and Group Conflict

Ross, L. & Ward, A. (1995). Psychological barriers to dispute resolution. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology: Vol. 27* (pp. 255-304).

Paluck, E. L. (2009). Reducing intergroup prejudice and conflict using the media: A field experiment in Rwanda. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 96*, 574-587.

8) Negotiation

Fisher, R., & Ury, W. (2011). *Getting to yes*. Penguin.
Chapter 3 – Focus on interests, not positions

Benoiel, M., & Cashdan, L. (2006). *The upper hand*. Platinum Press.
Chapter 2 – Know your objectives and the bottom line

Shell, G.R. (2006). *Bargaining for advantage*. Penguin.
Chapter 1 – The first foundation: Your bargaining styles

9) Behavioral Insights for Building More Equitable Societies

Lewin, K. (1946). Action research and minority problems. *Journal of social issues, 2*(4), 34-46.

Lewis Jr, N. A., & Yates, J. F. (2019). Preparing disadvantaged students for success in college: Lessons learned from the preparation initiative. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 14*(1), 54-59.

10) Moral and political decision-making

Kahneman, D., & Sunstein, C. (2005). Cognitive psychology of moral intuitions. In Changeux, J.-P., Damasio, A.R., Singer, W., & Christen, Y. (Eds.). *Neurobiology of Human Values* (pp. 91-107). Springer-Verlag Berlin.

Atran, S., Axelrod, R., & Davis, R (2008). Sacred barriers to conflict resolution. *Science, 317*, No. 5841., pp. 1039-1040.

11) Applied behavioral science

Ross, L., & Nisbett, R. E. (1991). The lessons and challenges of social psychology. *In The person and the situation: Perspectives of social psychology* (pp. 8-13). McGraw-Hill Book Company.

Sanders, M., Snijders, V., & Hallsworth, M. (2018). Behavioural science and policy: where are we now and where are we going?. *Behavioural Public Policy*, 2(2), 144-167.

Recommended:

Ross, L., & Nisbett, R. E. (1991). *The person and the situation: Perspectives of social psychology* (pp. 8-13). McGraw-Hill Book Company. Chapters 1, 7, and 8.

Michael Hallsworth and Elspeth Kirkman, [The Future of Behavioral Insights Demands Human Centered Design](#) (2020).

Lorde., A. (1979), The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. In Moraga C., and Anzaldua G. (Eds.). *This bridge called my back* (pp.98-101). Kitchen Table: Women of color press, New York.

Lorde, A. (1984). The transformation of silence into language and action. *Sister outsider* (pp. 40–44). Berkley: CA: Ten Speed Press.

12) Marketplace of ideas

Heath, C., & Heath, D. 2007. *Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die*. Random House. Introduction & Chapter 1 (pp.3-62).

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Four elements of the course will contribute to the final course grade. Each of these elements is described in more detail below. Their contributions will be weighted as follows:

Midterm Exam: 30%

Assignments (5 x 6%): 30%

Precept participation & engagement: 30%

Final paper: 10%

TOTAL 100%

Midterm exam:

The midterm exam will assess your understanding of the material covered in the first half of the course, using a format similar to the format of the IPE and the QE1. Specifically, we will provide you with information about one or several policy proposals and ask you to analyze behavioral aspects of those proposals. The exam is intended to give you mid-course feedback on your understanding of the material.

Assignments:

Your project for this course is to develop a government or private non-profit strategy designed to bring about a change in behavior – presumably the reduction of harmful behavior and/or the promotion of more constructive or beneficial behavior. You will do the first and fifth assignment individually. In assignments 2-4 you will develop an intervention with a group.

In Assignment 1, you will define and diagnose a problematic behavior of your choosing. In Assignment 2, you will be assigned to a group, then collectively define and diagnose a problem. In Assignment 3, your group will design an intervention based on a specific diagnosis of the problem you picked in Assignment 2. In Assignment 4, your group will plan a test for the efficacy of your intervention. In Assignment 5 you will write an op-ed piece about a policy topic of your interest.

Instructions for each assignment will be posted on the 502 Canvas site one week before an assignment is due. All assignments should be double-spaced with one-inch margins and 12-point font such as Times New Roman. Please include your individual ID number assigned for blind grading, page numbers, and Precept leader's name at the top of the document. All assignments should be submitted via Canvas and will be returned graded after the next precept. Assignments are due at **12 noon** on the Saturday deadline indicated in the syllabus schedule. If for any reason you are unable to submit your assignment on time, you must email Nick AND Britt at least 24 hours in advance of the deadline. Our expectation is that this will be a rare event. Assignments

submitted within 24 hours after the deadline will be penalized 20%. Assignments submitted more than 24 hours after the deadline will not be accepted.

Course participation:

Course participation will be assessed independently of the other course work. You are expected to watch all pre-recorded lectures and attend all precepts, to come to the precepts thoroughly prepared, and to participate actively in precepts and other course activities (including group work). One of the main goals of the precepts is to give you experience applying the concepts covered in lectures to policy issues. We strongly encourage you to be alert to the relevance of the course material to current policy issues and to bring examples from your experiences.

OFFICE HOURS

Professor Coman:

Email: acoman@princeton.edu

Office hours: by appointment

Professor Pronin:

Email: epronin@princeton.edu

Office hours: by appointment

Nick Buttrick (Post-Doctoral Research Associate):

Email: buttrick@princeton.edu

Office hours: Reserve at <https://calendly.com/nick-buttrick>

Zoom link: <https://princeton.zoom.us/my/nickbuttrick>

Britt Hadar (Post-Doctoral Research Associate):

Email: britt.hadar@princeton.edu

Office hours: Thursdays 1-4 pm

Zoom link: <https://princeton.zoom.us/my/britthadar>

Madalina Vlasceanu (Advanced Graduate Student):

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