

# COMM 631: Communication in Decision Making

Spring 2011, TR 3:30-5:18pm, Denney Hall 0206

## Professor

Dr. Ray Pingree

pingree.2@osu.edu

Office Hours: Mon 2-4pm (or by appointment), Derby 3026

## Course overview

This course provides an overview of theory and research on communication in decision-making. It aims to sensitize students to some of the most common communication problems in decision making while providing conceptual tools that can help at least understand, and in some cases solve, those problems in many real-world contexts. The course is divided into three units.

1. Unit one covers some basic theories of decision-making and the role of communication in individual decisions. These theoretical tools help differentiate sub-tasks in decision-making and highlight common errors, biases and simplification strategies.
2. Unit two covers small group processes, where most research on communication in decision-making has been conducted. This unit also includes more general small group process research (not just small group decision making) because group processes can be relevant when groups try to make decisions together, not just at other times.
3. Unit three examines communication in some other decision-making contexts such as family / relational decisions, democratic decisions, and health decisions.

## Required readings

Readings should be completed before the day of class listed on the syllabus.

- Textbook for unit 2: Baron, R. S., & Kerr, N. L. (2003). *Group Process, Group Decision, Group Action (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)*. New York: Open University Press.
- All readings for units 1 and 3 will be posted on Carmen.

## Grading

20%	In-class activities
20%	Midterm 1
30%	Midterm 2
30%	Final exam

### **In-class activities**

Many but not all class periods will include some kind of in-class activity. One purpose of these activities is to check attendance. You will receive full credit for each one you turn in as long as you put in a reasonable effort.

Your lowest 4 activity grades will be dropped. This means that you don't even need to tell me why you missed class unless you end up with 5 or more documented absences.

### **Exams**

Exams are non-cumulative and contain about 60% multiple choice and 40% short essay questions. They emphasize application of concepts stressed in lecture. Exam 1 is weighted less than the other two exams so that students who find my style of exams difficult at first can still recover.

### **Course Policies**

1. Academic misconduct, including but not limited to plagiarism, will be penalized through the procedures set up by the university.
2. Students with disabilities should make their needs known to me and seek assistance in a timely manner. If you feel you may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, you should contact me privately to discuss your needs. Please also contact the Office for Disability Services at (614) 292-3307 in Room 150 Pomerene Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

### **Tentative Class Schedule**

*Refer to the latest copy of the syllabus on Carmen – don't save a copy of this file, or you may miss changes in this schedule!*

March 29 (Tues): **Introduction, no readings.**

March 31 (Thurs): **Common mistakes in decision-making**

Hsee, C. K., & Hastie, R. (2006). Decision and experience: Why don't we choose what makes us happy? *Trends in Cognitive Science*, 10(1), 31-37.

April 5 (Tues): **Complexity and structure in decisions**

No readings

April 7 (Thurs): **Ways of simplifying decisions**

Pennington, N., & Hastie, R. (1986). *Evidence evaluation in complex decision-making. Personality and Social Psychology*, 51, 242-258.

April 12 (Tues): **Accountability and motivated reasoning**

Lerner, J. S., & Tetlock, P. E. (1999). Accounting for the effects of accountability. *Psychological Bulletin*, 125(2), 255-275.

April 14 (Thurs): **The role of emotion, exam review**  
Readings TBA

April 19 (Tues): **Exam 1**

April 21 (Thurs): **Intro to small groups**  
Baron & Kerr chapter 1

April 26 (Tues): **Group performance**  
Baron & Kerr chapter 3

April 28 (Thurs): **Motivation in groups**  
Baron & Kerr chapter 4

May 3 (Tues): **Groupthink and group polarization**  
Baron & Kerr chapter 6 through top of p108

May 5 (Thurs): **Social combination theories**  
Baron & Kerr chapter 7

May 10 (Tues): **Social dilemmas**  
Baron & Kerr chapter 8

May 12 (Thurs): **Other group decision research, exam review**  
No readings

May 17 (Tues): **Exam 2**

May 19 (Thurs): **Health decisions**  
No readings.

May 24 (Tues): **Democratic decisions: problem prioritization**  
No readings.

May 26 (Thurs): **Democratic decisions: citizen involvement**  
Abers, R. (2006). Porto Alegre and the participatory budget: Civic education, politics, and the possibilities for replication.

May 31 (Tues): **Electronic groups and decision support systems**  
Baron & Kerr chapter 11

June 2 (Thurs): **Decision framing and exam review**  
No readings.

June 7 (Tues): **Final exam**