ARTSSCI 4MN1 / Theories of Decision-Making and Judgement: A Practical Course for the Indecisive Artsci (2021-22)

Four sessions: Thursday October 21 and 28, November 4 and 11, 2021 6:30-8:30pm (Zoom)

Instructors: Daniel Carens-Nedelsky and Leanna Katz

Introduction

This course explores four modes of decision-making. We begin with personal decision-making and move outward to societal-level decision-making in law and policy. We conclude with a turn to technology-assisted decision-making in order to probe fundamental questions about how humans decide. In the personal decision-making unit, we draw on a variety of disciplines, including psychology, philosophy, and behavioural economics to glean lessons about how to make better decisions for ourselves. We then study legal decision-making by reading what judges have to say about how the law functions and we apply their analyses to a judicial decision. In the policy unit, we ask how to responsibly make decisions that impact other people and we look at patterns of who is left out in policy decisions. In the final unit, we dive into how humans use computers to make decisions more efficiently, noticing how human biases appear in algorithms, and conclude by using fiction to explore decision-making from unexpected perspectives. Throughout the course there are opportunities to reflect and participate in imaginative activities aimed at helping students integrate lessons from the course, and, hopefully, feel more comfortable making decisions in your own lives.

Assignments (maximum 500 words each)

Please send to leannagkatz@gmail.com and dcnedelsky@gmail.com.

Before week one: Write a reflection response to the first week's readings describing one or more ideas that particularly interested you. You are welcome to include a description of a decision that you hope to gain clarity on through the course. *Due Sunday October 17 by 8PM EST.*

After week four: Drawing on ideas from the course that resonated with you, reflect on the major ideas you will take from this course, consider how they will help with a decision you are facing, and/or develop a personal practice for exercising your decision-making abilities and judgement. *Due Thursday November 18 by 8PM EST*

Readings, Listenings and Activity List

Module One: Personal Decision-Making

- **[Ted Radio Hour](#): Decisions decisions decisions** hosted by Guy Raz with Malcolm Gladwell, Sheena Iyengar, Ruth Chang and Dan Ariely
- **Thinking Fast and Slow** by Daniel Kahneman, Chapter 1 The Characters of the Story and Conclusion "Two Systems"
- **Seven and a Half Lessons About the Brain** by Lisa Feldman Barrett, Chapter 4 Your Brain Predicts (Almost) Everything You Do
- **[The Art of Decision-Making](#)** by Joshua Rothman
- *Activity*: Core values exercise

Module Two: Legal Decision-Making

- **Good Judgement: Making Judicial Decisions** by Justice Robert Sharpe
- **Strange Alchemy of Life** by Justice Albie Sachs
- *Gosselin v. Québec (Attorney General)*, 2002 SCC 84 (selected excerpts)
- *Activity:* Analysis of *Gosselin* in light of Justice Sharpe and Sachs readings

Module Three: Policy Decision-Making

- **Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness** by Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein, Introduction and Chapter 4: When Do We Need a Nudge?
- **[How Economic Inequality Inflicts Real Biological Harm](#)** by Robert Sapolsky Introduction and section titled "Out of Control"
- **[99% Invisible Podcast](#): Invisible Women** hosted by Roman Mars with Caroline Criado Perez
- **The Reciprocal Relation of Judgement and Autonomy: Walking in Another's Shoes and Which Shoes to Walk In** by Jennifer Nedelsky
- *Activity:* "In another's shoes"

Module Four: Algorithms and Human Decision-Making

- **[Prediction Machines](#): The Simple Economics of Artificial Intelligence**
- **[What Data Can't Do](#)** by Hannah Fry
- **Note to Self Podcast: Algorithms to Live** [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#)
- **The Truth of Fact, the Truth of Feeling** by Ted Chiang
- *Activity***:** Embodied decision-making