



PADM 5392 Decision Making in Public Administration

Fall 2017, Online (3 Credit hours)

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Office Hour: Monday & Wednesday: 1 – 4pm or **by appointment**¹

Course Description

This course examines the theoretical and practical applications of administrative decision-making, with an emphasis on decision-making under conditions of uncertainty. The goal of the course is to provide students with insights and tools that will help to support and improve their own decision making. To understand decision-making, one must examine how decision-makers approach and solve problems. This course will review four general decision-making topics: 1) the challenging decision making environment that public administrator and nonprofit managers are facing; 2) the rational approach of decision-making; 3) the limitation of human rationality; and 4) naturalistic models of decision-making. These materials will also provide students the opportunity to learn about the strategies used by public and nonprofit managers to reduce risk. The course will also help students to understand the challenges related to decision making and help students to make better decisions. These goals will be achieved through a review the relevant decision-making literature, discussions of empirical cases studies, and the completion of real-world simulation exercises.

Course Objectives

After taking this course, the student will be able to:

1. Explain major approaches and tools to decision making;
2. Analyze decisions using the rational model perspective;
3. Recognize how bounded rationality and satisficing affect managerial decisions;

¹ All times mentioned in this syllabus are CST.

4. Explain how cognitive processes affect decisions and judgments at personal and organizational levels; and
5. Apply models that can improve decision-making under conditions of uncertainty and crisis.

Textbooks

There is no required textbook for this course. The readings will be provided via Blackboard as each topic unfolds.

Contacting the Professor

Feel free to contact me if you have any questions during the semester. You can reach me via email. In general, I will attempt to respond to emails within 24 hours from Monday to Friday.

Course Policies

Students (and the professor) will conduct themselves honorably throughout the course. We will treat each other with respect and dignity and create an atmosphere online in which open discussion and debate can take place.

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to access the course website and check university email account at least once a week. It is your responsibility to check the weekly topics, materials, assignments, and announcements posted on our course's Blackboard site. An Early Warning will be given to those who do not access the Blackboard site on a weekly basis. If there is a period where you are not able to access the Blackboard site during a given week, you must notify the professor of your absence.

Academic Dishonesty

All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused

of any form of academic dishonesty including but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials.

Religious Holy Days

Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Section 51.911 (a) (2) defines a religious holy day as: “a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20...” A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence. For a complete listing of the university policy, see:

<http://www.shsu.edu/dept/academic-affairs/documents/aps/students/861001.pdf>

Student Disability Services Statement

It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance should register with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Lee Drain Annex (telephone 936-294-3512, TDD 936-294-3786, and e-mail disability@shsu.edu). They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may affect adversely your work in this class, then I encourage you to register with the SHSU Services for Students with Disabilities and to talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: No accommodation can be made until you register with the Services for Students with Disabilities. For a complete listing of the university policy, see:

<http://www.shsu.edu/dotAsset/7ff819c3-39f3-491d-b688-db5a330ced92.pdf>

Instructor Evaluations

Students are encouraged to participate in course/instructor evaluation near the end of the semester.

Blackboard

The entire course will be conducted on the Blackboard. If you are new to Blackboard, I would recommend you to visit the website “Bb Student Orientation”. Once you log on to the course site on Blackboard, you can access the website by clicking the link in the panel on the left. The website provides you the instructions of how to access course materials, communicate with classmates and your professor, submit assignments, take tests and check your grades.

During the semester, if you have any technical problems that you cannot resolve, please contact the SHSU Online Support Desk, using the information below:

Call Phone

936-294-2780

M-F: 7 am – Midnight

Saturday: 8 am – 8 pm

Live Chat

[SHSU Online Support Desk](#)

M-F: 7 am – Midnight

Saturday: 8 am – 8 pm

Send Email

blackboard@shsu.edu

M-F: 7 am – Midnight

Saturday: 8 am – Midnight

Evaluation

This course will be graded on a 100-point scale as follows:

A	90.00 – 100.00
B	80.00 – 89.99
C	70.00 – 79.99
F	69.99 and lower

Student grades in this course will be based upon the following considerations:

Discussion Board Participation	45%
Analytical reports	20%
Application Briefs	15%
Midterm examination	10%
Final examination	10%

The following is a description of each of these elements. A more in-depth description and a rubric for how I will grade will be posted on the course’s Blackboard site.

Discussion Board Participation (45%): Every week students will be required to participate in class discussions. The first posting should be made by the end of Thursday of each week (except the first week of the semester). Participation in these discussions is essential to your success in this class and requires more than a one-time log in on your part. You will be given grade at the end of each week based upon your class discussion participation. The grading rubric will be provided on the course’s Blackboard site.

Analytical Reports (20%): It's important that we apply the concepts we learn in the classroom to real cases to better understand the stress and uncertainty decision makers face and the strategies can be developed. You will be asked to write two analytical reports (no longer than 4 double-spaced pages each) on assigned major cases or situation exercises throughout the semester. I will provide you a set of questions that guide you to write the reports. You will have several weeks to complete the tasks associated with writing an analytical report. Please pay attention to the task schedule posted on the Blackboard.

- Task 1: Read the material of the assigned case, or participate a simulation exercise, and take notes.
- Task 2: Draft your report and upload to Blackboard for peer review
- Task 3: Peer review two reports from your colleagues
- Task 4: Revise and submit your final report to the professor via Blackboard

Application Briefs (15%): Decision making in public administration does not happen in a textbook. It happens every day at the federal, state, and local levels. Each student is required to post two (2) application briefs related to the course topic of the assigned week. The purpose of this assignment is to apply theories learned from the course content to relevant real world cases. Detailed guidelines and a grading rubric will be provided on the course's Blackboard website.

Midterm Examination (10%): The midterm examination is scheduled in Week 9, which will cover the materials between Week 2 and Week 8. In this exams, students will be asked to answer several short essay questions. The purpose of the examination is to help students to review and synthesize what have learned in the course. During the exam, you can refer to course materials, notes and assignments, but not discuss the materials with your classmates or consult with other people. Please remember that all students are expected to comply with SHSU policy on academic integrity.

Final Examination (10%): The final examination is scheduled in Week 16, which will cover the materials throughout the semester. In this exam, students will be asked to answer several short essay questions. The purpose of the examination is to help students to review and synthesize what have learned in the course. During the exam, you can refer to course materials, notes and assignments, but not discuss the materials with your classmates or consult with other people. Please remember that all students are expected to comply with SHSU policy on academic integrity.

Schedule²

Week	Topics	Notes
Week 1 (8/23 – 8/27)	Overview	Initial Post: Group A & B
Week 2 (8/28 – 9/3)	Challenge of Decision Making in the context of uncertainty & complexity	Report 1 – Read and Note Initial Post: Group A
Week 3 (9/4 – 9/10)	Human beings as a rational animal (I) – Decision Making Tools	Initial Post: Group B
Week 4 (9/11 – 9/17)	Human beings as a rational animal (II) – Game Theory	Initial Post: Group A
Week 5 (9/18 – 9/24)	Are human beings rational?	Report 1 – Read and Note Initial Post: Group B
Week 6 (9/25 – 10/1)	Limitations of human rationality (I) – Heuristic Approach	Report 1 – Draft Initial Post: Group A
Week 7 (10/2 – 10/8)	Limitation of human rationality (II) – Decision Making in a group	Report 1 – Peer Review Initial Post: Group B
Week 8 (10/9 – 10/15)	Decision making – Integrated Perspective	Report 1 – Submit (Due by 10/15 at Midnight) Initial Post: Group A
Week 9 (10/16 – 10/22)	Midterm examination	
Week 10 (10/23 – 10/29)	Theories of Decision Making: Sensemaking	Initial Post: Group B
Week 11 (10/30 – 11/5)	Theories of Decision Making: Distributed Cognition	Initial Post: Group A
Week 12 (11/6 – 11/12)	Decision Making Exercise	Report 2 – Read & Note Initial Post: Group A & B
Week 13 (11/13 – 11/19)	Theories of Decision Making: Recognition Primed Decision Making	Report 2 – Draft Initial Post: Group B
Week 14 (11/20 – 11/26)	Thanksgiving Holiday	Report 2 – Peer Review
Week 15 (11/27 – 12/3)	Improve Decision Making in context of uncertainty and complexity	Report 2 – Submit (Due by 12/3 at Midnight) Initial Post: Group A & B
Week 16 (12/4 – 12/8)	Final examination	

² Course schedule is tentative and may be subject to revision.

Other University Resources

The Counseling Center

Sometimes as a university student, you might feel the need to talk to someone who can help you better understand decisions you face or those you have made. The on-campus Counseling Center provides you with a welcoming, confidential place to discuss your challenges and concerns with a professional counselor. Call 936-294-1720 for an appointment or go to <http://www.shsu.edu/dept/counseling/>.

The Sam Houston Writing Center

The Sam Houston Writing Center serves the students, staff, and faculty of SHSU. Their goal is to help people become better writers and develop more confidence in their writing abilities. Writing Center tutors provide one-on-one and small group writing instruction. Go to <http://www.shsu.edu/~wctr/> for more information.

*The instructor reserves the right to revise the syllabus.