General Information:

**Instructor:** Joshua Foster  
**Office:** Ivey Building 2323  
**Phone:** 519-661-2111 ext. 83945  
**E-mail:** jfoster@ivey.ca  
**Office hours:** Tuesdays from 12:00-2:00 PM using Zoom ([link here](https://link.to.zoom))  
**Delivery mode:** In person  
**Meeting time(s):** Tuesdays, 2:30-3:30 PM and Thursdays, 2:30-4:30 PM  
**Classroom:** SSC 2020  
**Course website:** [https://owl.uwo.ca/portal](https://owl.uwo.ca/portal)  
**Undergraduate inquiries:** 519-661-3507 or SSC Room 4075 or econugrd@uwo.ca

Registration:

You are responsible for ensuring you are registered in the correct courses. If you are not registered in this course, the Department will not release any of your marks until your registration is corrected. You may check your timetable by using the Login on the Student Services website at [https://student.uwo.ca](https://student.uwo.ca). If you notice a problem, please contact your home Faculty Academic Counsellor immediately.

Prerequisite Note:

The prerequisites for this course is are **Economics 2221B, 2222A, and 2261B.**

You are responsible for ensuring that you have successfully completed all course prerequisites, and that you have not taken any anti-requisite courses. Lack of prerequisites may not be used as a basis for appeal. If you are found to be ineligible for a course, you may be removed from it at any time and you will receive no adjustment to your fees. This decision cannot be appealed.

If you find that you do not have the course prerequisites, it is in your best interest to drop the course well before the end of the add/drop period. Your prompt attention to this matter will not only help protect your academic record, but will ensure that spaces become available for students who require the course in question for graduation.

Course Description:

This course will review recent findings in the fields of economics and psychology regarding the errors in human judgment and discuss their importance in an economic marketplace. On the one hand, it will increase awareness regarding the common flaws inherent in all humans...
while making decisions. On the other hand, it will discuss how “choice architects” can use this information to improve social outcomes in a variety of settings.

This course is fundamentally an economics course. As such, we will be interested in how various incentives and motivations influence the actions of individuals. However, we will take a more realistic approach to decision making than that made in neoclassical economics, which assumes that people are selfish, completely rational, that their preferences are stable, and that they know how to do complicated math and statistics intuitively. We will show that people are not always self-interested nor do they act rationally. They tend to use simple rules to answer complicated questions and thus make systematically predictable errors.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of this course, a dedicated student should be able to:

- Clearly communicate an understanding of how psychological biases can inform economic models of human behaviour - without relying on technical terms.
- Explain how behavioural economics differs from traditional neoclassical economics.
- Evaluate the contribution of controlled laboratory and field experiments to our general understanding of economic behaviour.
- Critically examine the assumptions that permeate economic models for their realism and value.
- Attain an improved set of communication and writing skills.
- Be able to correctly apply an ethical reasoning framework to analyse a business decision.
- Gain skills in professionalism and be able to conduct themselves in a professional manner.

Textbook(s) and Course Materials:


Attendance:

Attendance is extremely important. It’s so important it gets its own section in the course outline.

Assessments and Grading:

Students will be assessed on the following (% toward final grade):

- Weekly Homework Assignments (20%)
- Weekly Quizzes (40%)
- Essay, due at end of term (April 1), 3500 words (~15 pages double-spaced) (40%)

Expectations regarding these assignments:

- During assessments, students are forbidden to communicate with any person other than a proctor or the instructor.
- If there has been an illness self-report or approved, documented official
accommodation, a make-up assignment will be offered, or the weight of a missed assignment will be transferred to the next equivalent assessment.

- Written assignments will require submission to Turnitin.

Details on the essay assignment:

- This project is an opportunity for you to use behavioural economic theory to find ways of improving your community. Your task is to propose a public policy that addresses a behavioural bias in a community you are familiar with. The proposal should adhere to Libertarian Paternalistic principles, a topic we will discuss throughout this course. A compelling policy proposal could be nearly anything, but you are expected to use the concepts we develop in class to support your reasoning. A few examples of topic areas include i) cafeteria design and food choice, ii) study habits/procrastination on exam outcomes, or iii) promoting pro-social behaviour through incentivized donations. You will do your best work if you are writing about something you enjoy, so have fun with it!

- Your essay should be i) written by you alone, ii) approximately (and no more than) 3500 words, which is about 15 pages double-spaced, iii) professionally written, which includes proof-reading before submitting, using clear and concise language, considering all possible viewpoints, and citing academic sources to support your arguments.

- Late submissions: essays will be penalized 10% per 24 hours late, up to 72 hours. Essays not submitted within 72 hours of the submission deadline will be given a grade of zero.

- A one page outline for your essay topic must be submitted to the instructor no later than March 1, at which point you will receive feedback and guidance. The outline should answer the following questions regarding your policy proposal: i) what is the nature of the social problem? ii) how does this problem not adhere to standard economic theories of rationality? iii) what behavioural economic theory would you use to explain this problem? iv) broadly speaking, what type of policy intervention would you propose in light of the behavioural component you’ve identified in part iii? v) what are the expected outcomes of this policy if it were to be implemented successfully?

- Understand that plagiarism will not be tolerated. Refer to the Student Code of Conduct for information regarding the policy on plagiarism. This assignment will require you to submit your essay through Turnitin.

Professionalism, Privacy and Copyright:

- Students are expected to follow the Student Code of Conduct.

- All lectures and course materials, including slides, presentations, outlines, and similar materials, are protected by copyright. Students may take notes and make copies of course materials for their own educational purposes only.

- Students may not record lectures, reproduce (or allow others to reproduce), post or distribute lecture notes, assessments, or any other course materials publicly and/or for commercial purposes without written consent of the instructor.

- Recordings (audio or video) are not permitted without explicit, written permission of the instructor. Permitted recordings may not be distributed or shared.

- Students are expected to follow online etiquette expectations provided on OWL.

- Students may be asked to take an academic integrity pledge before some assessments.
• Some sessions may be recorded by the instructor. Recorded sessions will remain within the course site or be unlisted if streamed.