

1/5/07 **REVISED 4/17/07**

POLITICAL DECISION MAKING

Spring 2007

30:117

TTH 1:05-2:20, 21 SH

Professor David Redlawsk
Office Hours: TTh 2:30-3:45
or by appointment

Department of Political Science
375 Schaeffer Hall
335-2352
david-redlawsk@uiowa.edu

Syllabus

The necessity of making decisions pervades our life, and of course is at the crux of political activity. Decisions about war and peace; decisions about guilt or innocence; decisions about which political candidate to support along with innumerable other choices; all define the direction of our political institutions and daily political lives. But decision making is certainly not unique to politics, and the study of decision making is a multi-disciplinary study, bringing in such diverse perspectives as economics, psychology, political science, and organizational management.

This course will provide a survey of decision-making literature in three general realms. First, we will look at decision making in the executive branch, using as our case study the decision processes surrounding the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1963. Second we will turn our attention to arguments about how and why we should make “rational” decisions. Finally we will turn to the role of emotion in decision making. In the first section we will be looking at how leaders and elites make decisions, while in the other two sections we will spend time looking at how ordinary people make ordinary political decisions with an eye towards understanding both normative prescriptions for how decision making ought to proceed as well as psychological descriptions of what really happens when decisions have to be made. Ultimately, one of our questions is whether or not normatively correct decision making can be employed, and if not, what alternatives exist to minimize the risks associated with potentially faulty decision making processes.

Course Web Site

I have a web site at <http://www.uiowa.edu/~c030111/> which contains information for this course. Among other things, this syllabus will be posted there, as will any changes necessitated in the schedule due to unforeseen circumstances. Additional readings will be accessible from the web page. In addition, I intend to include links to decision making research and resources elsewhere on the web, which will be optional reading, but which may provide resources in preparing your short papers and studying for the final exam.

Requirements

1. First and foremost, you cannot successfully complete this class if you do not attend! Class participation is expected, so any student with more than 3 unexcused absences will receive a lower grade based on failure to participate in the class.
2. Each student in the class will be responsible for leading class discussion on one of our days. Assignments will be made after the first day of class. Leading the class means providing us with a 10 minute overview of the readings and identifying two or three key issues. You will provide the class with a brief written summary of this overview and key issues which you will post on our course website discussion board at least a day ahead of the date you are to be discussion leader.

3. Three short papers are required, corresponding to the three segments of the class. The first two of these papers will be drafted and rewritten in conjunction with our class “Writing Fellows” (more on this below). The third, which will be due at the end of the semester, will not be read by the Fellows. For all papers (including the last one) you will do a rough draft which will be due in class on the date listed. On that day you **MUST** attend class with three copies of your draft. You will work in groups of three or four reading and critiquing each others’ work and providing written comments on your colleagues’ rough drafts.
4. A take home Final Exam handed out the last day of class.

Short Papers

The rough draft for each of these short (5 page) papers is due on the date listed on the schedule. No late papers will be accepted. The idea behind these papers is to ask you to think in some more detail about the arguments being made in our readings. Thus, each paper is expected to be an application of the readings in that section of the syllabus, including readings up to and including the week the paper is due. In order to do these papers, you may find it necessary to search for other resources that support or oppose the theses in the assigned readings. You are expected to cite properly any work you use that is not your own original work. Failure to properly cite sources leaves you open to the charge of plagiarism. My expectation is that whatever your own opinions and arguments about the readings and their applications, you will find outside sources to support them.

PAPER 1

For this paper I would like you to identify some decision made by a governing entity (US Congress, State legislature, UI President/Provost/Dean, or any other at any level of government) and apply *one* of Allison’s models to the decision, using whatever readily available information you can acquire about the subject. This means you identify the decision context, who the players are, and the like, and then decide which of Allison’s models best describes the process that the decision makers used and the actual decision itself. This is not an in depth research project, so sources such as news reports, magazine articles, and the like are fine, to the extent that they can give you insight into what happened. Please be sure to identify the decision you are looking at and provide background information so that as the reader I understand the context in which the decision was made, the decision itself, and the results of the decision. Feel free to critique Allison – it is legitimate to look at a decision and decide that Allison’s models are wrong. However, if you do so, you need more evidence than simply your own opinion.

PAPER 2

Our readings in this section of the course focus on how decisions *ought* to be made and the cognitive limitations inherent in human beings that draw us away from these normative prescriptions. Your task in this paper is to draw this together to consider the question of individual decision-making in a *political* context. From what you now know about individual decision making, is there any hope for democracy? That is, if we assume that a functioning democracy requires “good” decisions on the part of its citizens – such as in voting for the best available candidate – can we really expect democracy to work? Write a paper that ties together the work we read in this section and considers how and if citizens can make the decisions needed to keep things running smoothly. If they can, how do they do it, given the problems we have read about. If they can’t, then what would you prescribe to help them do better?

PAPER 3

In this section we've learned that it may not always been a good idea (or even possible) to subsume our emotions when trying to make decisions. Emotions may inherently be tied to the decision making process and may in fact be a necessary component of the system. So despite the fact that our parents always tell us to make our decisions "rationally" and to "not get so emotional" we have to ask if this is even possible. Write a paper that integrates our understanding of emotions from our reading into the work we've done throughout the rest of the semester. What role do emotions play? Do they enhance or hurt our ability to make "good" decisions? Try to tie together the different strands of our readings and discussions to explain just how people actually "should" make decisions and contrast that to what we think we know they do, both cognitively and emotionally.

Writing Fellows

Writing Fellows is a peer tutoring program to increase the awareness and importance of writing, revising, and collaborative learning in courses across the disciplines. The Writing Fellows Program started at Brown University in the early eighties and has since spread to large and small colleges all over the U.S. As Honors students competitively selected for their writing abilities and social skills and trained in a special course to tutor, University of Iowa Writing Fellows comment on a group of writers' polished drafts and then meet with these writers to discuss approaches to revision.

For this semester our Writing Fellows will be Kevin Heintz and Megan Johnson. You will be assigned to one Fellow who will work with you on both of your first two papers. The process is simple. You will write a rough draft of your paper and bring it to class for peer review on "collaboration" day. Following this you will make an appointment to meet with your Fellow who will have read your paper and prepared a critique. Using the feedback from peer review and your Fellow, you will then rewrite your paper into a final draft to be turned into me for grading on the date listed.

Grading

Short Papers	60%
Final Exam:	20%
Class Participation/Leader:	20%

Required Books

Books are available at Iowa Book & Supply.

Allison, Graham & Zelikow, Philip. *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 2nd Ed. 1999. Addison, Wesley, Longman. ISBN: 0321013492.

Damasio, Antonio. *Descartes' Error*. 1995. Quill Press. ISBN: 0380726475.

Hastie, Reid and Dawes, Robyn. *Rational Choice in an Uncertain World*. 2001. Sage. ISBN: 076192275X

In addition, some additional required readings will be made available on the class website.

Schedule

PART 1 – Executive Branch Decision-Making

January 16 & 18 (1,2)

Discussions: Introduction to Course
The CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS
Model I – Rational Decision Making

**READ: Allison, Introduction
Allison, Ch. 1**

January 23 & 25 (3,4)

MOVIE Missiles of October

January 30 & Feb 1 (5,6)

Discussions: Applying Model I to Cuba
Model II – Organizational Decision Making

READ: Allison, Ch. 2 & 3

February 6 & 8 (7,8)

Discussions: Applying Model II to Cuba
Model III: Governmental Politics

READ: Allison, Ch. 4 & 5

February 13 (9)

Discussions: Applying Model III to Cuba
Wrap up of Executive Decision Making

READ: Allison, Ch. 6 & 7

February 15 (10)

Discussions: Critiques of Allison's models

READ: Bendor & Hammond, Rethinking Allison's Models, *American Political Science Review*, 1992. Available online at:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0003-0554%28199206%2986%3C301%3ARAM%3E2.0.CO%3B2-6>

McKeown, Plans and Routines, *Journal of Politics*, 2001

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0022-3816%28200111%2963%3A4%3C1163%3APARBBA%3E2.0.CO%3B2-D>

February 20 (11)

SHORT PAPER 1 DRAFT DUE IN CLASS FEB 20

FINAL DUE IN CLASS MAR 6

COLLABORATION DAY

PART 2 – Rational Decision Making

February 22 (12)

Discussions: Some history of decision-making research
Basic issues in decision quality
Understanding random events

READ: Hastie & Dawes, Ch. 1, 2 & 8
(Note, if you do NOT have a basic understanding of probability theory, read also Hastie & Dawes, Appendix)

Feb 27 & Mar 1 (13,14)

Discussions: A Framework for Judgment
The problems of trying to make good decisions
Where do we go wrong?

READ: Hastie & Dawes, Ch. 3-5
Paulos, *Innumeracy*, Ch 2

March 6 & 8 (15,16)

Discussions: More problems of trying to make good decisions

READ: Hastie & Dawes, Ch. 6 & 7

March 20 (17)

Discussions: Uncertainty and Decision Making

READ: Hastie & Dawes, Ch. 9 & 14

March 22 (18)

Discussions: Evaluating Choices

READ: Hastie & Dawes, Ch. 10 & 11

March 27 & 29 (19,20)

Discussions: Decision Theories – How SHOULD we do it?

READ: Hastie & Dawes, Ch. 12 & 13

April 3 (21)

Discussions: Comparing psychologists to political scientists
Quattrone & Tversky, *Contrasting Rational and Psychological Analyses of Political Choice*, *American Political Science Review*, 1988.
<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0003-0554%28198809%2982%3C719%3ACRAPAO%3E2.0.CO%3B2-8>

April 5 (22)

SHORT PAPER 2 DRAFT DUE IN CLASS APR 5
FINAL DUE IN CLASS APR 19
COLLABORATION DAY

PART 3 – Emotions and Decision Making

April 10 (23)

Discussions: The role of Emotions in Decision Making

READ: Damasio, Ch. 1-4

April 12 *NO CLASS – Midwest Political Science Assoc. Meeting*

April 17 & 19 (24, 25)

Discussions: How might the emotional system work?

READ: Damasio, Ch. 5-11, Postscript

April 24 & 26 (26, 27)

Discussions: Cognitive vs. Emotional Perspectives on Decision Making in Political Science

READ: Lodge, Taber, and Weber, 2006. “First Steps Towards Dual Process Model...” in David Redlawsk (ed), *Feeling Politics: Emotion in Political Information Processing* (April 24) Available on ICON site

Ottati, Isbell, and Burns, 2006. “Affect and Politics.” in David Redlawsk (ed), *Feeling Politics: Emotion in Political Information Processing*. (Apr 26) Available on ICON site

(do not read)

~~Sniderman, Brody, & Tetlock, Reasoning and Choice, Ch 9.~~

~~Lau, R.R., and Redlawsk, D.P. 2001. Advantages and Disadvantages of Cognitive Heuristics in Political Decision Making *American Journal of Political Science* 45: 4 pp. 951-971.~~

~~<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0092-5853%28200110%2945%3A4%3C951%3AAADOCH%3E2.0.CO%3B2-T>~~

May 1 (28)

READ: Marcus, George, “The Psychology of Emotions and Politics,” *Oxford Handbook*, pp. 182-221.

(Do not read)

~~Lodge, Milton & Charles Taber, “First Steps toward a Dual Process Accessibility Model of Political Beliefs, Attitudes, and Behavior,” in David Redlawsk (ed), *Feeling Politics: Emotion in Political Information Processing*.~~

May 3 (29)

SHORT PAPER 3 DRAFT DUE IN CLASS MAY 3

FINAL VERSION DUE IN MY OFFICE NO LATER THAN NOON MAY 8

COLLABORATION DAY

TAKE HOME EXAM DISTRIBUTED; DUE IN MY OFFICE, 5:00PM MAY 10.

Political Science Web Site Information

Please visit the Political Science Department's web site: <http://www.polisi.uiowa.edu>. It is frequently updated regarding new events and procedures in our department, changes in the Schedule of Courses, plus TA and faculty hours when available. You may also find current information on pre-advising, and registration. Our Vernon Van Dyke Computing Facility (Political Science ITC) is located in Room 21 Schaeffer Hall. Available hours are listed at our web site and also posted outside Room 21 SH.

Using Email and this class:

Please feel free to email me if you have questions at any time during the semester at david-redlawsk@uiowa.edu. I will try to respond to email questions within 24 hours.

IMPORTANT: Do not submit your assignments to me via email. Assignments submitted via email will not be accepted. Part of each assignment is attendance and participation in class on the day the assignment is due. If you are unable to attend class on an assignment due date then a paper copy of the assignment (non-electronic) will be accepted if accompanied with a documented excuse for your absence.