

Critical Decision Making for Public Managers Course Syllabus

I. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

This course presents students with an overview of thinking about decision-making and has them apply it to public administration. In the early days of public administration (PA), decision-making was a key focus for scholars and practitioners. The early work of Herbert Simon on decision-making as the quintessential administrative act was a fundamental basis of this focus in both public and business administration as well as psychology and economics. Nevertheless, this early focus on decision-making has been supplanted largely in current PA scholarship which focuses on other topics ranging from networks to performance management to diversity.

A. Purpose

The purpose of this course is to revisit decision-making in PA but under specific constraints and from a defined perspective. It starts by reviewing the framework of rational, administrative decision-making as presented by early thinkers such as Simon and the outline of heuristic, psychological decision-making introduced by thinkers like Daniel Kahneman. The course focuses on an outgrowth of this latter descriptive approach to decision-making largely informed by Gary Klein's work on Naturalistic Decision-Making (NDM) resulting in the Recognition Primed Decision-making (RPD) model. It examines how decisions are operationalized by individuals in context and how decision-makers rely on experience and cues rather than just information and constraints as they do in the earlier administrative approaches. For RPD, a more appropriate description of decision-making is to *recognize* an appropriate match to patterns learned in the past for the current situation and to see an effective course of action.

For the course, this point of view will be called *Critical Decision-making* (CDM) based on Klein's *Critical Decision Method* which looks at the key judgments about values and actions made during an incident which is perceived as important or urgent to resolve (i.e. *Critical*). These situations are *Critical* in other ways, as well: they feature uncertainty about the available information for, the dominant values in, the significance outcomes of, the time limits for, and the degree of risk involved in decisions. Also, from an administrative perspective, these features and the type of situation encountered vary depending on the organizational position and authority of the decision-maker. One assumption is that there are differences to CDM as applied by public executives in policy-level decisions, by public managers in implementing-level decisions, and by public-sector operators in delivery-level-decisions.

Although the course takes a primarily descriptive point of view, it will consider some normative aspects of decision-making in a limited manner. It will examine the possibility of improving decision-making by developing the ability to identify situations and recognizing and projecting courses of action. From the perspective of CDM, public administrators can still make good decisions even when they do not know all the options available in a situation. Outcome effectiveness is based on the recognition of an appropriate pattern from previous experience whether that previous experience is in a loop repeated in the current situation or found in other situations in the past. These patterns are used to recognize effective courses

of action in the current situation and are used until they are modified, fail and are replaced, or reach their end and are augmented by other patterns from experience. Proficiency in decision-making in these situations then is the ability to select and apply appropriate patterns of action or to alter the situation to fit available patterns. The CDM model is a two-step blend of intuition and analysis:

1. Recognizing a course of action that makes sense
2. Imagining the course of action in the circumstances at hand to see if the results will make sense.

B. Objectives

This course aims to do four things. First, it reviews decision-making models. Second, it presents a CDM model that indicates how CDM might be applied to different contextual areas. Third, it asks students to develop some cases from experience and apply the model to different contexts. Fourth, it will try to identify lessons learned for improved decision-making in the public sector, improved training in decision-making, as well as ideas for further research. The course has the following five learning objectives:

1. Students will recognize the basic models for decision-making in PA
2. Students will identify the theory and principles behind CDM
3. Students will complete practical exercises on decision-making problems
4. Students will apply the principles of CDM to their own experience
5. Students will develop cases using CDM principles

II. READINGS AND MATERIALS

A. Course texts

1. Klein, Gary A. 1998. *Sources of power: How people make decisions*. MIT Press. Cambridge: Massachusetts.
2. Klein, Gary A. 2003. *The power of intuition*. Currency, Doubleday. New York. New York

B. Supplementary Reading and Other Course Materials

In addition to the text for the course, there will be supplementary readings available. These will be found below as *V Supplementary Reading List*. The listed readings are referenced on *VI Course Schedule* below by the name of the first author. PDF copies of the articles will be available for students on the course's UNM Learn site. Students should review the course's UNM Learn site frequently. The instructor will post assignment instructions and grades to the UNM Learn site. In addition, class discussion questions may be posted to the UNM Learn site as well as other pertinent information or links to items.

III. ASSIGNMENTS AND REQUIREMENTS

A. Attendance and Participation (10 points)

Students are expected to attend and participate in scheduled class sessions as indicated by the instructor. Students begin the semester with 10 points for attendance and participation. Students may miss one scheduled session without penalty. Additional absences will result in a deduction of 2 points for each session missed unless a documented (written and submitted by an appropriate authority) medical or emergency reason is provided. Attendance counts if a student arrives in the first hour of class. At the end of the course students may be evaluated for their participation in in-class activities and have points deducted for failure to do so.

B. Reading Summary (25 points) and Reading Summary Presentations (5 points)

Students will be assigned readings from the supplementary reading list to summarize and present in class focusing on key lessons or takeaways. Short presentations by each student will be made on the date to be assigned by the instructor in an assignment schedule that will be posted on the UNM Learn site and the presentations will be submitted to the UNM Learn site. An annotated bibliography with brief, (approximately, 650 words, 2 or 3 paragraphs) written summaries of each of the assigned readings will be required at the end of the course as indicated on the schedule. Instructions for presentations and written summaries will be posted on the UNM Learn site. The best presentation score will be recorded.

C. CDM Case Proposal (5 points) and CDM Case Proposal Presentation (5 points)

Students will develop a one-page (approximately 650 words) CDM case proposal for their final paper. Instructions for the proposal and presentation will be posted on the UNM Learn site and the proposal and presentation will be submitted to the UNM Learn site. The CDM case proposal will include reasons for selecting the case and a preliminary description of the CDM case. After submitting the proposal, a short, in-class presentation will be made by each student. Presentations will begin shortly after submission of proposals as indicated on VI Course Schedule. A separate schedule with assigned dates for each student’s presentation will be posted on the UNM Learn site. Regular, in-class discussions about student advancement of and challenges in developing the CDM case paper will be held to provide students with timely feedback.

D. CDM Case Paper (40) and CDM Case Presentation (10)

A maximum ten-page (approximately 6,500 words) CDM case paper will be submitted as a final course paper. The paper will describe and explain a CDM case in public administration in the students’ own experience or from a documented and detailed set of facts. The CDM case paper will present any relevant organizational background and numeric facts, including, but not limited to its size, structure, and processes, environment, management, distribution of authority, personalities, and politics. Successful papers will present and explanation a CDM case that includes a description of the situation, background, scenario, context, options, potential outcomes, consequences, risks, actors, actions, information, timing, decision process, and taken decision in a narrative explanation that tells the complete story of the decision. The paper should be considered academic research and will require citation and reference of current public administration-related academic journals in APA style. Before submitting the CDM case paper, a short, in-class presentation of the paper will be made by each student. Instructor feedback aimed at improving the paper’s development will be provided at that time. Instructions for the paper and presentation will be posted on the UNM Learn site and the paper and presentation will be submitted to the UNM Learn site. Presentations will begin as indicated on VI Course Schedule. A schedule with the assigned dates for presentation will be posted to the UNM Learn site.

Assignment Values

Assignment	Points
Attendance and Participation	10
Reading Summary Presentation (Best Score)	5
Reading Summaries (Annotated Bibliography)	25
CDM Case Proposal	5
CDM Case Proposal Presentation	5
CDM Case Presentation	10
CDM Case Paper	40
	100

Grading

A	90
A-	85
B+	80
B	75
B-	70
C	60

IV. ADDITIONAL NOTES: TITLE IX; NETIQUETTE; ARC**A. Title IX**

To meet obligations under Title IX, UNM faculty, Teaching Assistants, and Graduate Assistants are considered “responsible employees” by the Department of Education (see pg. 15 - <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/ga-201404-title-ix.pdf>). This designation requires that any report of gender discrimination which includes sexual harassment, sexual misconduct and sexual violence made to a faculty member, TA, or GA must be reported to the Title IX Coordinator at the Office of Equal Opportunity (oeo.unm.edu). For more information on the campus policy regarding sexual misconduct, see: <https://policy.unm.edu/university-policies/2000/2740.html>

B. Netiquette

In accord with the UNM Student Handbook, it is expected that students will show respect to fellow students and to the instructor when interacting in person or on-line in this course. Netiquette suggestions should be taken seriously. All course posts should demonstrate respect for others and for their views and those that do not will be taken down immediately. The UNM Learn Netiquette document can be found at <http://online.unm.edu/help/learn/students/pdf/discussion-netiquette.pdf>

C. ADA Accommodation

In keeping with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990, the University is committed to providing equal access to educational opportunities for qualified students with disabilities. The University provides reasonable academic adjustments to qualified students with disabilities as necessary to ensure equality of access to the courses, programs, services, and facilities of the University. However, students with disabilities are still required to adhere to all University policies, including policies concerning conduct and performance. Further information about accommodation and contact with the University’s Accessibility Resource Center (ARC) can be found by reviewing Policy 2310 at <https://policy.unm.edu/university-policies/2000/2310.html>

VI. SUPPLEMENTARY READING LIST

1. Akinci, C., & Sadler-Smith, E. (2012). Intuition in Management Research: A Historical Review. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 14(1), 104-122.
2. Alison, L., Power, N., van den Heuvel, C., Humann, M., Palasinski, M., & Crego, J. (2015). Decision inertia: Deciding between least worst outcomes in emergency responses to disasters. *Journal of Occupational & Organizational Psychology*, 88(2), 295-321.
3. Ash, J. S., & Smallman, C. (2008). Rescue Missions and Risk Management: Highly Reliable or Over Committed? *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, 16(1), 37-52.
4. Basel, J. S., & Bruhl, R. (2013). Rationality and dual process models of reasoning in managerial cognition and decision making. *European Management Journal*, 31(6), 745-754.
5. Betsch, T., & Glockner, A. (2010). Intuition in Judgment and Decision Making: Extensive Thinking Without Effort. *Psychological Inquiry*, 21(4), 279-294.
6. Buchanan, L., & O'Connell, A. (2006). A brief history of decision making. *Harvard business review*, 84(1), 32-41, 132.
7. Frankish, K. (2010). Dual-Process and Dual-System Theories of Reasoning. *Philosophy Compass*, 5(10), 914-926.
8. Gibbons, R. (2003). Team theory, garbage cans and real organizations: some history and prospects of economic research on decision-making in organizations. *Industrial and Corporate Change*, 12(4), 753-787.
9. Gore, J., Flin, R., Stanton, N., & Wong, B. L. W. (2015). Applications for naturalistic decision-making. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 88(2), 223-230.
10. Gore, J., & Sadler-Smith, E. (2011). Unpacking Intuition: A Process and Outcome Framework. *Review of General Psychology*, 15(4), 304-316.
11. Groenendaal, J. (2015). The application of Naturalistic Decision Making (NDM) and other research: lessons for frontline commanders. *The application of Naturalistic Decision Making (NDM) and other research: lessons for frontline commanders*, 1-13.
12. Hayes, J., & Maslen, S. (2015). Knowing stories that matter: learning for effective safety decision-making. *Journal of Risk Research*, 18(6), 714-726.
13. Heikkila, T., & Isett, K. R. (2004). Modeling Operational Decision Making in Public Organizations: An Integration of Two Institutional Theories. *The American Review of Public Administration*, 34(1), 3-19.
14. Hoffrage, U., & Marewski, J. N. (2015). Unveiling the Lady in Black: Modeling and aiding intuition. *Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition*, 4(3), 145-163.
15. Hogarth, R. M. (2010). Intuition: A Challenge for Psychological Research on Decision Making. *Psychological Inquiry*, 21(4), 338-353.
16. Johnston, J. H., Driskell, J. E., & Salas, E. (1997). Vigilant and hypervigilant decision making. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 82(4), 614-622.
17. Kahneman, D., & Klein, G. (2009). Conditions for intuitive expertise: a failure to disagree. *The American psychologist*, 64(6), 515-526.
18. Kahneman, D., & Klein, G. (2010). When can you trust your gut? *McKinsey Quarterly*(2).
19. Khatri, N., & Ng, H. A. (2000). The role of intuition in strategic decision making. *Human Relations*, 53(1), 57-86.
20. Militello, L. G., Sushereba, C. E., Branlat, M., Bean, R., & Finomore, V. (2015). Designing for military pararescue: Naturalistic decision-making perspective, methods, and frameworks. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 88(2), 251-272.
21. Miller, C. C., & Ireland, R. D. (2005). Intuition in strategic decision making: Friend or foe in the fast-paced 21(st) century? *Academy of Management Executive*, 19(1), 19-30.
22. Mishra, H., Mishra, A., & Nayakankuppam, D. (2007). Seeing Through the Heart's Eye: The

- Interference of System 1 in System 2. *Marketing Science*, 26(5), 666-678.
23. Moxley, J. H., Anders Ericsson, K., Charness, N., & Krampe, R. T. (2012). The role of intuition and deliberative thinking in experts' superior tactical decision-making. *Cognition*, 124(1).
 24. Nj, O., & Rake, E. L. (2008). An Essay on Research Methodology: An Alternative Approach to Incident Command Research Through Participatory Action Research. *Journal of Contingencies & Crisis Management*, 16(2), 91-100.
 25. Rosen, M. A., Shuffler, M., & Salas, E. (2010). How Experts Make Decisions: Beyond the JDM Paradigm. *Industrial & Organizational Psychology*, 3(4), 438-442.
 26. Sadler-Smith, E., & Shefy, E. (2004). The intuitive executive: Understanding and applying 'gut feel' in decision-making. *Academy of Management Executive*, 18(4), 76-91.
 27. Salas, E., Rosen, M., & DiazGranados, D. (2010). Expertise-Based Intuition and Decision Making in Organizations. *Journal of Management*, 36(4), 941-973.
 28. Shattuck, L. G., & Miller, N. L. (2006). Extending naturalistic decision making to complex organizations: A dynamic model of situated cognition. *Organization Studies*, 27(7), 989-1009.
 29. Simon, H. A. (1944). Decision-Making and Administrative Organization. *Public Administration Review*, 4(1), 16-30. 72435
 30. Sinclair, M., & Ashkanasy, N. M. (2005). Intuition - Myth or a decision-making tool? *Management Learning*, 36(3), 353-370.
 31. Sommer, M., & Njå, O. (2012). Dominant Learning Processes in Emergency Response Organizations: A Case Study of a Joint Rescue Coordination Centre. *Journal of Contingencies & Crisis Management*, 20(4), 219-230.
 32. Wally, S., & Baum, J. R. (1994). Personal and Structural Determinants of The Pace of Strategic Decision-Making. *Academy of Management Journal*, 37(4), 932-956.

V. COURSE SCHEDULE

Session	Date	Topic	Reading (Texts and List #'s)	Activity
		Module 1: Introduction to the Course		
1.	1-23	An Introduction to Administrative Decision-making		Course Orientation Topical Introduction
2.	1-30	Approaches to the Study of Administrative Decision-making	Text 1 Ch. 4-5	Exercise: Describing a Decision
		Module 2: Evolution of Thinking about Administrative Decision-making		
3.	2-6	History and Models of Thinking about Administrative Decision-making	Text 1 Ch. 7-8 6, 29	Reading Summary Assignment Exercise
4.	2-13	Decision-making in Organizations: Executives, Managers, and Operators	Text 1 Ch. 14 8, 13	Reading Summaries Case Paper Proposal Assigned
		Module 3: Psychology of Decision-making and Intuition		
5.	2-20	System 1 & System 2 Decisions	Text 1 Ch. 9 Text 2 Ch. 1 4, 7, 22	Reading Summaries Case Paper Discussion
6.	2-27	Intuition in Decision-making	Text 2 Ch. 2-5 1, 5, 17, 18	Reading Summaries Case Paper Proposals Due Case Proposal Presentations
7.	3-6	Challenges for Intuition	Text 2 Ch. 6-9 10, 15, 30	Reading Summaries Case Paper Discussion Case Proposal Presentations
	3-13	<i>Spring Break</i>		
		Module 4: Naturalistic and Critical Decision-making and Administrative Expertise		
8.	3-20	Naturalistic Decision-making (NDM) and Methods	Text 1 Ch. 1-2 Text 2 Ch. 10-12 9, 11, 20	Reading Summaries Case Paper Assignment
9.	3-27	Recognition-primed Decision-making (RPD) and Expertise	Text 1 Ch. 3, 10, 11 23, 25, 27	Reading Summaries Case Paper Discussion
10.	4-17	Critical Decision-making (CDM), NDM, and Operational Decision-making	Text 1 Ch. 10-13 Text 2 Ch. 15-16 2, 3, 14, 16	Reading Summaries Case Paper Discussion
11.	4-10	CDM, NDM, and Intuition in the Executive Function	Text 1 Ch. 15-16 Text 2 Ch. 13-14 19, 21, 26, 28	Reading Summaries Case Paper Discussion
12.	4-3	Extending CDM and NDM to Complex Organizations	Text 1 Ch. 17 12, 24, 31, 32	Reading Summaries Case Paper Discussion

13.	4-24	Case Research		Case Paper Presentations
14.	5-1	Case Research <i>[Flex Week]</i>		Case Paper Presentations
15.	5-8	Finals Week (No Class) Case Research		Case Paper and Summaries Due