

PSYC2371

The Science of Everyday Thinking



We will explore the psychology of our everyday thinking: why people believe weird things, how we form and change our opinions, why our expectations skew our judgments, and how we can make better decisions. We'll discuss and debate topics such as placebos, the paranormal, medicine, miracles, and more. You will use the scientific method to evaluate claims, make sense of evidence, and understand why we so often make irrational choices. You will begin to rely on slow, effortful, deliberative, analytic, and logical thinking rather than fast, automatic, instinctive, emotional, and stereotypical thinking.

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CONSULTATION We will be available before or after class or by appointment for other times.

REQUIRED READINGS

Gilovich, T. (1991). *How We Know What Isn't So: The Fallibility of Human Reason in Everyday Life*. New York: The Free Press.

BACKGROUND

This course is going to be unlike any course you've ever taken before, so you need to know a few things. First thing you need to do is enrol in [The Science of Everyday Thinking](#), which is offered online through edX, the not-for-profit Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) provider founded by Harvard and MIT. We'll let you know where to sign-up during the first week of class. Throughout the semester, you'll watch the "lecture" videos in your own time, and we'll spend class time working through the content.

We've worked hard to produce the best online experience that we could imagine. We met with 21 leading thinkers from across the globe to film conversations about everything from hindsight to horoscopes. Special guests include Daniel Kahneman—who won the Nobel in economic science—and the MythBusters duo: Adam Savage and Jamie Hyneman, along with a range of expert thinkers from the world's top universities.

Students from every country in the world have enrolled in this course, but what distinguishes this Massive Open Online Course from the others is *you*. You are among the few students at UQ who not only experience the course online but who are also enrolled in the UQ campus-based course. Our goal is not to replace the campus experience with an online experience. Instead, we want to use the online course to free up our time and resources to offer you the best live, UQ-campus experience possible.

When we meet face-to-face in the first class, we'll explain the material and logistics of the course, do some activities, and watch *Episode 1* together. When you leave class, you'll have a week to watch *Episode 2 - Illusions* on your computer, television or mobile device. You'll complete the online activities and quizzes, do some reading, and discuss and debate the material with your UQ classmates on Reddit. When you show up for class the following week, you'll already be familiar with the material in *Episode 2*, so now we can devote this class time to exchange ideas, debate topics, and think. We're offering the best of both worlds: the best online content featuring the best people on the planet, and the best live and interactive experience on campus at UQ. We'll continue this process during each week of the semester as you watch each episode on edX. There are no tutorials in PSYC2371.

ASSESSMENT

As you will soon learn in the course, there is a great deal of evidence that: (1) spacing learning over time and testing frequently will result in a deep and genuine understanding of the content; (2) applying the content to new situations will result in better learning; and (3) providing frequent and immediate feedback improves comprehension. To this end, we have provided the following assessment:

Weekly quizzes (11 quizzes at 5% each, with your lowest grade dropped)	50%
<i>Change the World</i> Final Paper	25%
<i>Change the World</i> Final Video	13%
Reddit Discussion (1 post, 1 response, and 5 votes per episode = 1%)	12%

WEEKLY QUIZZES

Several experiments have demonstrated that repeated testing of information results in better retention compared to repeated study. Tests that require effortful retrieval of information, such as short-answer tests, promote better retention than tests that require recognition, such as multiple-choice tests (Roediger, Agarwal, McDaniel, McDermott, 2011).

Each teaching week corresponds to an episode that you need to watch online on edX. In the table below, there is also a list of assigned readings for each week. You will be tested, each week, on the content of the edX episode, the live activities, and the assigned readings. There will be 11 of these short quizzes, and they will be worth 5% each. We will take the ten best marks from your quizzes throughout the semester, which will comprise 50% of your total mark. These weekly quizzes will ensure that you keep up with the course content and will provide you with immediate feedback on what aspects you don't understand.

After each episode on edX, there is an online quiz with 10 questions. These quizzes are completely optional, but since you'll be tested on the very same material during the class, it would certainly be worth your while to work through these online quizzes to be sure that you understand the content that we presented. If you're missing your grade, or if you would like to view your quiz, please email one of the tutors.

CHANGE THE WORLD FINAL PAPER AND VIDEO

In this course, we're trying to provide you with the tools to be able to improve your everyday thinking. Towards the end of this course, you'll have the tools to *think* better, and you can use those tools to *do* better. We want you to think about what you can do to make the world smarter, more rational, less superstitious. Look around you and see what's broken and exactly what you can do to fix it. If there's a change that you want to see, what are you going to do to make it happen? Throughout the course, we'll give you the tools to be able to change the world; now it's up to you to use them.

This idea of changing the world might seem idealistic or lofty, but it's not as difficult as you might think. The goal of the Change the World project is to determine the extent to which you genuinely understand the material in the course by applying it to a current topic that we haven't discussed in the lectures or tutorials.

For example, Why do some parents refuse to vaccinate their children? Why did you decide to become a vegetarian? Why did Toowoomba say "No" to recycled water? What's with the personality test that your company used to hire a new employee? Did your best friend really just go on a lemon detox diet? Can the sniffer dog who just went through your luggage *actually* detect hidden drugs, or is he just responding to his handler? Does that judge really expect the jury to "disregard the evidence?" Is the university lecture *really* the best use of students' time and money? Why did you just buy that thing? Why did you just donate money to that charity? Why did the government/university/business just decide to do X? Why isn't anyone doing anything about climate change?

In the paper and video, you will have described the topic, the psychology — the reasons that people in this situation are behaving irrationally, why they persist in a particular belief, refuse to change their opinion, and so on. But don't stop there! You need to do something about it. You need to describe what actions, what specific behaviours you took to make a difference.

Will you start a petition? Maybe you'll record a short persuasive YouTube video and share it through social media? What about starting a meme and spreading it on Reddit? Perhaps you'll write an opinion piece in the *Brisbane Times* or *The Australian*. Maybe you'll start small by creating a Wiki entry on the topic. What about writing a letter to a politician or an influencer? Start a Facebook group, a debate, a Kickstarter campaign, or even a protest. It's also an exercise in opinion change. Think about times in your life when you've been motivated or persuaded to act or finally do something. Maybe it was small like clicking "SHARE", maybe it was more substantial like donating your money or time. What can you do to persuade and motivate other people to act? What are you going to do to change the world?

The Change the World project is worth 38% of your final mark: 25% will be for your paper, which will apply material in the course to some current topic of interest, and 13% will be for creating a "Change the World video" that's based on the same information as your paper. There is a 2,000 word limit on this project (excluding references). Think of it more like a thoughtful, well-referenced blog post or opinion piece, rather than a passive, formal essay.

You need to discuss your topic with the tutors and claim it by posting your topic in the relevant subreddit thread. It's in your best interest to run your topic by them well ahead of the deadline to ensure that nobody else has selected the same topic and to be certain that the topic will apply nicely to the course content. The paper and the video are both due on the very last day of class. We will distribute a set of detailed marking criteria before you select your topic. If you're reading this in the first week of class, what we're asking you to do may not seem clear. Don't worry. You will work with us during class in the coming weeks, and we will help you create an excellent paper!



[Click to watch the edX Change the World Showcase](#)

REDDIT DISCUSSION

The best way to ensure that you apply the course material to your everyday life is to *practice* applying the material. We will create a course subreddit, and each week of the course, you'll provide an example from your experience, respond to someone else's post, ask questions about the material, help each other out, and up-vote on the posts that are interesting or helpful (and down-vote those that aren't). In the last week of class, you'll need to provide evidence of your reddit posts and responses for each of the 12 episodes. In order to get the 12% for this piece of assessment, you need to demonstrate that you've provided a meaningful post (at least a few sentences) about each of the 12 episodes and provided a meaningful response to someone else's post. To be clear: 12 posts and 12 responses (+ votes) in one episode will get you 1%; 12 posts and 12 responses (+ votes) in 12 episodes will get you 12%; 120 discussion posts and responses (+ votes) in 12 episodes will get you 12%. *You need to post stuff each week of the course, not just at the very end.*

EDX GRADES

You will be doing both the edX course and the UQ-based course: *PSYC2371*. Your final grade in *PSYC2371*, however, will not depend on how well you perform on the quizzes on edX. But it would certainly be in your best interest to complete the quizzes each week on edX so you can see how well you're going and to help you prepare for the in-class quizzes. As we said above, you *will* be assessed on your contribution to the Reddit threads. If you are interested in tracking your progress and performance on edX, be sure to click on "Course Information" when you log in.

SUBMISSION PROCESS

You'll submit your written assignment and Reddit Posts through TurnItIn on Blackboard, and you'll submit your video by following the link we'll provide on Blackboard, clicking the upload button, and then selecting your video file, which includes only your student ID number to upload: 40531782.mp4.

COURSE GRADING

Grade 1, Fail: Fails to demonstrate most or all of the basic requirements of the course: 0–23.99%

Grade 2, Fail: Demonstrates clear deficiencies in understanding and applying fundamental concepts; communicates information or ideas in ways that are frequently incomplete or confusing and give little attention to the conventions of the discipline: 24–46.99%

Grade 3, Fail: Demonstrates superficial or partial or faulty understanding of the fundamental concepts of the field of study and limited ability to apply these concepts; presents undeveloped or inappropriate or unsupported arguments; communicates information or ideas with lack of clarity and inconsistent adherence to the conventions of the discipline: 47–49.99%

Grade 4, Pass: Demonstrates adequate understanding and application of the fundamental concepts of the field of study; develops routine arguments or decisions and provides acceptable justification; communicates information and ideas adequately in terms of the conventions of the discipline: 50–64.99%

Grade 5, Credit: Demonstrates substantial understanding of fundamental concepts of the field of study and ability to apply these concepts in a variety of contexts; develops or adapts convincing arguments and provides coherent justification; communicates information and ideas clearly and fluently in terms of the conventions of the discipline: 65–74.99%

Grade 6, Distinction: As for 5, with frequent evidence of originality in defining and analysing issues or problems and in creating solutions; uses a level, style and means of communication appropriate to the discipline and the audience: 75–84.99%

Grade 7, High Distinction: As for 6, with consistent evidence of substantial originality and insight in identifying, generating and communicating competing arguments, perspectives or problem solving approaches; critically evaluates problems, their solutions and implications: 85–100%

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC	READING DUE	ASSESSMENT
1	TBA	EPISODE 1 A TASTE	Gilovich - Ch 1,2	Episode 1 Discussion (we'll explain in class)
2	TBA	EPISODE 2 ILLUSIONS	Gilovich - Ch 3,4; Vokey - Subliminal Messages	Episode 2 Discussion; Episode 2 Quiz
3	TBA	EPISODE 3 KNOW THYSELF?	Kahneman Ch 4,5; Wilson - The Unseen Mind	Episode 3 Discussion; Episode 3 Quiz
4	TBA	EPISODE 4 INTUITION AND RATIONALITY	Kahneman - Ch 11,12,14; Ariely - Supply and Demand	Episode 4 Discussion; Episode 4 Quiz
5	TBA	EPISODE 5 LEARNING TO LEARN	Make it Stick - Ch 1; Dunlosky - Strengthening the Student Toolbox	Episode 5 Discussion; Episode 5 Quiz
6	TBA	EPISODE 6 THE EXPERIMENT	Salsburg Ch 1; Stanovich - Ch1 Lady Tasting Tea	Episode 6 Discussion; Episode 6 Quiz
7	TBA	EPISODE 7 FINDING THINGS OUT	Feynman - The Pleasure of Finding Things Out	Episode 7 Discussion; Episode 7 Quiz
8	TBA	EPISODE 8 EXTRAORDINARY CLAIMS	Gilovich - Ch 10	Episode 8 Discussion; Episode 8 Quiz Topic selection due
9	TBA	EPISODE 9 HEALTH CLAIMS	Gilovich - Ch 8	Episode 9 Discussion; Episode 9 Quiz
	TBA	Midsemester Break	None	None
10	TBA	No Class	None	None
11	TBA	EPISODE 10 APPLIED THINKING	Allen - Ch 1; Reardon (2014)	Episode 10 Discussion; Episode 10 Quiz
12	TBA	EPISODE 11 EXPLOIT THE SITUATION	Nisbett & Ross - Personal Consistency	Episode 11 Discussion; Episode 11 Quiz
13	TBA	EPISODE 12 CHANGE THE WORLD	Applying behavioural insights to charitable giving	Episode 12 Discussion; Episode 12 Quiz Change the World Paper and Video due; Evidence of Discussion posts due