

EN4166: LANGUAGE AND DECISION MAKING

Effective Term

Semester B 2025/26

Part I Course Overview

Course Title

Language and Decision Making

Subject Code

EN - English

Course Number

4166

Academic Unit

English (EN)

College/School

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CH)

Course Duration

One Semester

Credit Units

3

Level

B1, B2, B3, B4 - Bachelor's Degree

Medium of Instruction

English

Medium of Assessment

English

Prerequisites

Nil

Precursors

Nil

Equivalent Courses

Nil

Exclusive Courses

Nil

Part II Course Details

Abstract

As a primordial means of communication, language plays an essential role in shaping people's decision making. Professional communicators stand out because they understand how to employ effective linguistic strategies to motivate

individuals to take desirable actions and identify the similar designs from others. Drawing on theories of linguistics, communication studies, and psychology, this course introduces various theoretical frameworks that explain the intrinsic correspondence between subtle language features and critical decision-making in a range of professional contexts. Through interactive lectures, case studies, and group projects, students will employ theories to critically examine real-world decision-making issues and design effective intervention strategies to create more socially desirable outcomes.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

CILOs		Weighting (if app.)	DEC-A1	DEC-A2	DEC-A3
1	Describe and explain the key theories and common biases in language and decision making.		x	x	
2	Employ theories to examine the use of language in real-world decision-making issues.		x	x	
3	Develop a critical understanding of the strengths and limitations of various language intervention strategies across different professional communicative contexts.		x	x	x
4	Creatively design language intervention strategies to improve communicative outcomes of real-world professional communicative issues.		x	x	x

A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to real-life problems.

A3: Accomplishments

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

LTAs		Brief Description	CILO No.	Hours/week (if applicable)
1	Independent reading	Students will read articles and book sections that introduce critical theories and approaches to the study of language and decision-making.	1, 2	
2	Interactive lectures	Students will participate in interactive lectures in which principles and theories of language and decision-making are evaluated and discussed.	1, 2, 3	

3	Case studies	Students will critically examine real-world decision-making issues by employing theories they learn in class.	1, 2, 3	
4	Action projects	Students will apply the theories they learn in class to design effective language intervention strategies to address real-world decision-making issues they identify.	1, 2, 3, 4	

Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)

	ATs	CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks ("- for nil entry)	Allow Use of GenAI?
1	In-class test	1, 2, 3	30	Individual: Students will complete an in-class written test that assesses their understanding of the theories and concepts they learn in class.	No
2	Analytical essay	1, 2, 3	30	Individual: Students will individually complete one written task that critically examines language and decision-making issues.	No
3	Group project	1, 2, 3, 4	30	Groupwork: Students will work in small groups to create language intervention strategies to improve people's decision-making. The level of AI adoption in the assignment is restricted as outlined in the assessment guidelines in the course.	Yes

4	Participation	1, 2, 3, 4	10	Individual: Students will be expected to participate actively in class and in online discussions. The level of AI adoption in the assignment is restricted as outlined in the assessment guidelines in the course.	Yes
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Continuous Assessment (%)

100

Examination (%)

0

Assessment Rubrics (AR)**Assessment Task**

In-class tests (40%)

Criterion

Demonstrates skills in describing, explaining, analyzing, comparing and evaluating language use in decision-making.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Demonstrates excellent skills in describing, explaining, analyzing, comparing and evaluating language use in decision making and consistently maintains a high degree of grammatical accuracy in giving descriptions, explanations, analyses, comparisons and evaluations.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Demonstrates good skills in describing, explaining, analyzing, comparing and evaluating language use in decision making and shows a relatively high degree of grammatical control in giving descriptions, explanations, analyses, comparisons and evaluations.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Demonstrates adequate skills in describing, explaining, analyzing, comparing and evaluating language use in decision making and communicates with reasonable accuracy in giving descriptions, explanations, analyses, comparisons and evaluations.

Marginal (D)

Demonstrates very limited skills in describing, explaining, analyzing, comparing and evaluating language use in decision making and uses simple structures correctly in giving descriptions, explanations, analyses, comparisons and evaluations.

Failure (F)

Unable to demonstrate skills in describing, explaining, analyzing, comparing and evaluating language use in decision making and shows only limited control of a few simple grammatical structures and sentence patterns in giving descriptions, explanations, analyses, comparisons and evaluations.

Assessment Task

Individual essay (20%)

Criterion

Students will be assessed based on the analysis, the evidence, the argument, and the language.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Provides a very thorough and critical analysis strongly supported by ample evidence. The discussion or argument is extremely coherent and well developed, with excellent integration between the various parts of the essay.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Provides a good analysis supported by evidence. The discussion or argument is coherent and reasonably developed, with good integration between the various parts of the essay.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Provides a satisfactory analysis supported by some evidence. The discussion or argument is somewhat coherent and satisfactorily developed, with some integration between the various parts of the essay.

Marginal (D)

Provides a marginal analysis without sufficient support. The discussion or argument demonstrates little coherence and development, with little integration between the various parts of the essay.

Failure (F)

Did not complete the essay or did not provide evidence for the analysis. The discussion or argument is incoherent and fragmented, and the various parts of the essay are not integrated.

Assessment Task

Group project (30%)

Criterion

Students will be assessed based on their content and their language.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

The project shows full understanding of main issues and concepts and a high level of engagement with relevant concepts covered in class. All relevant information is included in explanation of issues and concepts. The case is extremely well-presented and the arguments made are extremely clear, supported by evidence. Coherent arguments expressed in clear and accurate English.

Good (B+, B, B-)

The project shows sound understanding of main issues and concepts and a good level of engagement with relevant concepts covered in class. Most relevant information is included in explanation of issues and concepts. The case is competently presented and the arguments made are clear most of the time, supported by evidence. Relatively coherent arguments expressed in clear and mostly accurate English.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

The project shows adequate understanding of main issues and concepts and some engagement with concepts covered in class. Sufficient information is included in explanation of issues and concepts. The case is adequately presented and the arguments made are reasonably clear, partially supported by evidence. The arguments lack focus and there may be problems with the organization with language issues.

Marginal (D)

The project shows inadequate understanding of main issues and concepts and limited engagement with concepts covered in class. Insufficient information is included in explanation of issues and concepts. The case is sketchily presented and the

arguments made are not entirely clear, partially supported by evidence. The arguments lack focus and there are serious problems with the organization, with serious language issues.

Failure (F)

The project shows little understanding of main issues and concepts and no engagement with concepts covered in class. Very limited information is included in explanation of issues and concepts. The case is presented in a limited way and the arguments made are unclear without any support by evidence. The arguments fail to present a coherent analysis and the analysis is incomplete or incomprehensible.

Assessment Task

Participation (10%)

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Student is highly engaged in class/group activities and discussions and extremely proactive in offering insightful views on topics covered.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Student is engaged in class/group activities and discussions and active in contributing views on topics covered.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Student participates in learning activities and offers views on topics covered from time to time.

Marginal (D)

Little evidence of participation in learning activities, and views on topics covered are offered infrequently.

Failure (F)

No evidence of participation in learning activities, and no views on topics covered are offered.

Part III Other Information

Keyword Syllabus

Biases, Choice Architecture, Prospect Theory, Framing, Metacognition, Processing Fluency, Linguistic Agency, Persuasion, Foreign Language Effect, Language Content, Language Style, Language Sequence, Language and Norm

Reading List

Compulsory Readings

	Title
1	Thaler, R. H., & Sunstein, C. R. (2021). <i>Nudge: The final edition</i> . Yale University Press.
2	Pogacar, R., Mecit, A., Gao, F., Shrum, L. J., & Lowrey, T. M. (2022). Language and consumer psychology. In L. R. Kahle, T. M. Lowrey, & J. Huber (Eds.), <i>APA Handbook of Consumer Psychology</i> (pp. 451–470). American Psychological Association.
3	Ledford, V., Ramírez, A. S., & Nan, X. (2024). Urgent communication during public health crises: Reaching linguistically diverse populations. In P. Ortega, G. Martínez, M. Lor, & A. S. Ramírez (Eds.), <i>The Handbook of Language in Public Health and Healthcare</i> (pp. 511–531). Wiley.
4	Baker, S. C., Watson, B. M., & Gallois, C. (2020). Social Psychology and Language. In S. C. Baker, B. M. Watson, & C. Gallois, <i>Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Psychology</i> . Oxford University Press.

Additional Readings

Title	
1	Cialdini, R. B. (2021). <i>Influence, New and Expanded: The Psychology of Persuasion</i> . Harper Business.
2	Goldstein, N. J., Martin, S. J., & Cialdini, R. (2008). <i>Yes!: 50 scientifically proven ways to be persuasive</i> . Simon and Schuster.
3	Dillard, J. P., & Shen, L. (Eds.). (2013). <i>The Sage handbook of persuasion</i> . Sage.