COURSE DESCRIPTION
MNO2705 LEADERSHIP AND DECISION MAKING UNDER UNCERTAINTY
Semester 1, 2025/2026

Instructors:

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1. Overview

The decisions you make every day will shape your life. In the workplace, the decisions you make will impact outcomes for you, your team, and cumulatively affect the trajectory of your career. This course will help you navigate the pathways of decision making in organizations. We will adopt an evidence-based approach, tapping several streams of research – including social psychology, behavioural economics, and management – to identify key anchors for effective decision making. These conceptual tools will empower you to make good decisions in an uncertain world, to influence, and to lead.

This course addresses the foundations for decision making in modern organizations, where the requirements of speed, global reach, complexity and change that our organizations face also create conditions for unsafe and unethical business practices to persist. Reports of insider trading, graft and cronyism, unsafe products, unfair employment practices and environmental waste are commonplace in the media. Thus, our concern is with anchors for morally decent or ethical decision making.

2. Course Objectives

The key objectives of this course are:

- Better understand how individual and collective decisions are made in organizations.

- Develop an understanding of the effects of cognitive biases, heuristics, emotions and social dynamics on decision processes and outcomes.

- Understand practical ways for leaders to become more effective in making decisions and implementing them.

3. Evaluation Components

Overall course grades are based on evaluations of both individual and collaborative work. Final grades reflect relative performance among peers.

Individual coursework

1. Class participations	20%
2. Individual asssessment	30%

Collaborative coursework (5-7 people)

3. Team project	50%

A note on teamwork: Members of a team will receive the same grade for the collaborative work. However, the instructor may adjust individual grades if unequal contributions are evident. You are encouraged to adopt a proactive attitude and resolve any issues early on. If you encounter problems working with your peers, do not hesitate to contact the instructor for consultation and support.

4. Course Readings

One or more readings (e.g., articles, cases) are assigned as preparatory work for each class session. Please refer to Section 8 of this syllabus for full information on readings. They are available through the online NUS library portal, as well as through CANVAS.

5. Modes of Teaching and Learning

The seminar format of this course gives us ample time for discussion and reflection. In addition to materials presented by the instructor, class activities involve small group dialogue, case discussion, and experiential exercises. You will also learn through your own study of assigned readings and completion of assignments.

The success of this course relies heavily on creating a safe and supportive learning environment for everyone. Your active participation and open sharing is essential, as is the participation of your peers. Therefore, listen carefully to peers and share your views with them in a civil and respectful manner.

We strive to create a learning culture by stimulating participation, creativity, and spontaneity. Be appreciative, active, and questioning in order to maximize your own and others' learning.

Learner responsibilities: To benefit most from each class session, you should:

- Prepare for class by completing assigned readings and cases.
- Participate actively in class.
- Plunge (Dive deep): question, think critically, be open to new perspectives, and learn from others.

Group exercises are central to the learning process—take your responsibility to your group seriously by being prepared for the exercise and playing your part.

Outside of classes, our main modes of class communication are through CANVAS and e-mail. Check your NUS mailbox and CANVAS regularly for announcements, updates, and uploaded materials.

Role of the instructor: Instructors play a facilitating role by structuring processes, promoting and guiding discussion, and giving feedback. They will spend little time providing anything that you can read on your own. Class time is reserved for working with ideas, exchanging perspectives, and new learning.

6.1 Class Participation (Individual, 20%)

Participate actively in class sessions. Ask thoughtful questions, make constructive comments, challenge assumptions, bring in good examples from current events and life experience, and build on others' ideas.

Assessments of class participation will reflect the quality and consistency of your engagement and contribution to learning throughout the semester. The following criteria will be used to:

Assessment	Behavior Anchors
Need Improvement	▪ Absent ▪ Does not respond or participate in discussions and activities ▪ Demonstrates passive or very infrequent involvement
Fair	▪ Prepares for seminar sessions—understands the topic but does not try to answer or elaborate when called upon ▪ Occasionally comments and participates in discussions and activities ▪ Demonstrates a fair level of involvement
Good	▪ Prepares well for seminar sessions—provides thoughtful comments with relevant points ▪ Frequently participates in discussions and activities ▪ Demonstrates active and consistent involvement
Excellent	▪ Prepares fully for seminars: asks thoughtful questions, offers insightful perspectives, experiences, or reflections ▪ Always participates in discussions and activities ▪ Contributes in a way that enhances the learning of all who are present

6.2. Individual Assessment, Wed, 22 Oct, 7-9 pm (Individual, 30%)

This individual assessment provides an opportunity for you to demonstrate your understanding of and ability to work with course concepts and frameworks. It covers the subject-matter from class and assigned readings.

6.4. Team Project (Team, 50%)

For this project, your team will be studying a decision challenge that an Asia-based organization faces. The choice of organization and decision issue will be determined by the team.

As a team, you will be drawing on your learning in this course to 1) define the decision challenge clearly, 2) understand the decision situation by thoroughly analyzing the factors shaping it, 3) identify the strengths and weaknesses of the organization's decision approach, 4) draw insights from your study to help us better understand the foundations for effective decision making, and 5) present your learning to your colleagues in a manner that is meaningful, memorable and motivating.

7. Criteria for Evaluating Written and Presented Work

Communication with managers and professionals must be clear, precise, and informative. They present their thoughts with logic and supporting rationale. We look for similar elements in your work:

- **Clarity:** Make sure that written and presented work is organized and easy to follow. Convey your main points to readers and in a logical manner. Do not gloss over the foundations—spell words correctly and adhere to rules for grammar and usage.

- **Creativity:** The quality of *your* ideas is important. Show creative, independent thinking as much as possible. Other things being equal, we reward creativity and thinking "outside-the-box."

- **Support/Justification:** Support your assertions with evidence from relevant sources (e.g., text, reading, interviews). Be sure to acknowledge sources.

- **Specificity:** Be specific rather than vague. You will have greater difficulty justifying general observations/statements. Also, accurate use of technical terminology is critical. It is better to use an everyday word you understand than to use a nice-sounding technical term incorrectly.

- **Wisdom:** Think through the implications of your recommendations (well beyond the obvious). Acknowledge and address potential unintended consequences and inherent trade-offs.

Academic Integrity: Signing your name to an assignment establishes the work as your own. This is the case for both individual and teamwork. Academic integrity and honesty are essential for the pursuit and acquisition of knowledge. The University and School expect every student to uphold these values at all times. Academic dishonesty is any misrepresentation intended to deceive, failure to acknowledge a source, falsification of information, inaccuracy of statements, cheating on examinations/tests, or inappropriate use of resources.

Plagiarism is 'the practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own' (The New Oxford Dictionary of English). The University and School do not condone plagiarism. You have the obligation to make clear to the assessor which work is your own, and which is the work of others. Otherwise, your assessor can assume that everything presented for assessment is entirely your own work. This is a minimum standard. In case of any doubts, consult your instructor.

Additional guidance is available at:
http://www.nus.edu.sg/registrar/administrative-policies/acceptance-record.html#NUSCodeofStudentConduct

Online Module on Plagiarism:
http://emodule.nus.edu.sg/ac/

NUS Policy on AI

The following are always improper uses of AI tools:

- ✖ Generating an output and presenting it as your own work or idea.

- ✖ Generating an output, paraphrasing it, and then presenting the output as your own work or idea.

- ✖ Processing an original source not created by yourself to plagiarize it (e.g., using an AI paraphrasing tool to disguise someone else's original work, or even the output of an AI tool, and then presenting the final output as your own work or idea).

All of the above violate NUS policies on academic honesty and anyone found to have done any of them will be dealt with accordingly. Keep in mind that even though AI tools are not authors and thus cannot be harmed by someone stealing an idea from them, it is still wrong to represent yourself as having produced something when you did not do so.

If you completed any work with the aid of an AI tool, assuming a setting in which the instructor gave permission for such tools to be used, you should always acknowledge the use. **Using the outputs of an AI tool without proper acknowledgement is equivalent to lifting or paraphrasing a paragraph from a source without citation and attracts the same sanctions.**

8. Schedule of Topics

Week 1 11-15 Aug	Leadership, Uncertainty and Decision Making
Week 2 18-22 Aug	Ethical Decision Making in Action
Week 3 25-29 Aug	Thinking Fast and Slow: Decision Biases and Heuristics
Week 4 1-5 Sep	Thinking Fast and Slow: Decision Biases and Heuristics
Week 5 8-12 Sep	Group Decisions: Collaborating
Week 6 15-19 Sep	Negotiated Decisions: Coopetition
20-28 Sep	No Class: Reading Week
Week 7 29 Sep-4 Oct	Decision Making in a Complex World
Week 8 6-10 Oct	Design Thinking
Week 9 13-17 Oct	Team or Individual Consultations
Week 10 20-24 Oct	Individual Assessment (Wednesday, 22 Oct, 7-9 pm)
Weeks 11 27-31 Oct	Team Presentations
Week 12 3-7 Nov	Team Presentations
Week 13 10-14 Nov	Final Session: Reflection/Wrap up