



## KIIS Austria Program, Summer 2024

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### PSY 299 Topics: Problem Solving & Decision Making

**Instructor:** Patrick J Cushen

**Email:** pcushen@murraystate.edu

**Instructor's office hours:** on site and by appointment

*Syllabus subject to change*

### 1. Course Description:

An introduction to behavioral decision-making theory and research. Topics include the roles of memory and knowledge organization in critical thinking, logic and reasoning in problem-solving, decision-making under uncertainty, heuristics and biases, and multidisciplinary applications.

### 2. Overall KIIS Program Student Learning Outcomes:

#### KIIS Study Abroad Mission Statement:

KIIS provides high-quality education abroad programs for students from all diverse backgrounds that promote deep international learning, are integrated into the curriculum, and encourage critical and creative thinking. Our goal is to help students understand the wider world and develop personal and professional skills for lifelong enrichment. We strive to go beyond generalizations and cultural stereotypes to help foster a nuanced appreciation of the world in which we live.

#### Students participating on KIIS study abroad programs aim to:

- 1) Understand contemporary issues of their host country/countries (i.e. KIIS program location).
- 2) Develop skills to interact comfortably in a global setting.
- 3) Understand other cultures.

Prior to your KIIS study abroad program, and again at the conclusion of your program, KIIS will ask each student to a) answer a few multiple-choice questions, and b) write a short reflective essay (two paragraphs in length) related to the elements detailed above. There is no right or wrong answer, and your responses will not affect your grade in any way. The purpose of the exercise is to help KIIS measure the effectiveness of its study abroad programs.

### 3. Course Objectives and Specific Learning Outcomes:

The student will be able to

- A. Distinguish among normative, prescriptive, and descriptive models of thinking
- B. Discuss the role of memory in decision-making and problem-solving

- C. Compare and contrast automatic and effortful cognitive processes
- D. Identify and describe major problem-solving approaches
- E. Identify common blocks to problem-solving and provide examples of each
- F. Discuss the role of probability in decision-making under uncertainty
- G. Identify examples of commonly used decision-making heuristics
- H. Critically evaluate and apply the principles of behavioral decision research to a variety of fields

#### **4. Major Topics covered in the Course:**

This course will cover a variety of topics across problem solving, reasoning, and decision making, including

- A. General principles & strategies of problem solving
- B. The role of expertise in problem solving
- C. Creativity
- D. Analogy
- E. Syllogistic, conditional, and probabilistic reasoning
- F. General principles of decision making
- G. Prospect theory & decision making heuristics
- H. The role of intuition & emotion in decision making
- I. Group processes in problem solving and decision making

#### **5. Required Readings and Materials:**

Short readings and reprints will be made available throughout the course.

#### **6. Graded Assignments:**

Grades will be determined by a combination of quizzes, participation/discussion activities, and writing assignments.

**Quizzes.** There will be short quizzes during most class periods that will cover material from the previous class, assigned readings, or recent field experiences. These quizzes cannot be made up if missed. However, the lowest 2 quiz grades will be dropped at the end of the course. (~40% of grade)

**Participation Activities.** Class experiences (including discussions and field experiences) will often incorporate graded activities. You are expected to complete these activities during the discussion or experiences for which they are relevant. (~30% of grade)

**Writing Assignments.** You will be asked to complete 3 short writing assignments throughout the course. These papers will relate to readings, discussions, and other activities during the course. Specific details about each assignment will be provided as they are assigned. (~30% of grade)

#### **7. Attendance Policy:**

KIIS program participants are expected to be punctual to and in attendance at all classes, presentations, meetings and required excursions, and to remain with the program for the full academic period. Unexcused absences from classes and/or mandatory meetings will result in a lowering of the student's final grade, as will excessive tardiness. Multiple unexcused absences could result in expulsion from the program. Any absence from an academic class session must be excused for medical reasons.

## **8. Disability Accommodation:**

KIIS will make every reasonable effort to provide accommodations for program participants with special needs or disabilities, but we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. Be aware that many foreign countries do not have comprehensive legislation comparable to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). As a result, businesses and other establishments operating in foreign countries may not be able to provide accommodations.

If you have a disability accommodation need, we recommend you contact your KIIS Campus Representative, <https://www.kiis.org/about-kiis/contact-us/campus-representatives/> early in your program selection process so that s/he has time to discuss any specific needs, including which KIIS programs may be best suited. You also are welcome to contact KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning, [maria.canning@wku.edu](mailto:maria.canning@wku.edu), to discuss your disability accommodation needs (e.g. housing, transportation, excursions, class schedule, etc.).

Immediately after acceptance, notify KIIS Admissions and Enrollment Specialist, Haley McTaggart, [haley.mctaggart@wku.edu](mailto:haley.mctaggart@wku.edu), if you have a special need or disability that might require any form of accommodation abroad. Failure to notify KIIS may prevent you from participating on your KIIS program.

If you require any accommodations abroad, you must provide KIIS Admissions and Enrollment Specialist, Haley McTaggart, an accommodation letter from your home campus' disability accommodation office that lists the accommodations you are eligible to receive. Please do not request accommodations directly from your KIIS Program Director or other KIIS Faculty; the KIIS Office will notify your KIIS Program Director and/or Faculty after we have received your above accommodation letter.

In some cases, you may need to make arrangements for a caregiver to join you on your KIIS program, should your physician, campus disability accommodation office, or KIIS make such a recommendation or require it.

## **9. Title IX / Discrimination & Harassment:**

Recent attention to gender discrimination and sexual harassment at colleges and universities reminds us of the importance of adhering to standards of ethical and professional behavior. KIIS Study Abroad is committed to supporting and encouraging safe and equitable educational environments for our students, faculty, and program directors. Students, faculty, and program directors are required to be civil and treat each other with dignity and respect. As such, harassment and/or discrimination of any kind will not be permitted or tolerated.

Sexual misconduct (sexual harassment, sexual assault, and sexual/dating/domestic violence) and sex discrimination are violations of KIIS policies. If you experience an incident of sex/gender-based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct, you are encouraged to report it to a) KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning (+1-859-200-1000) or KIIS Executive Director, John Dizgun (+1-270-227-2288), b) WKU's Title IX Coordinator, Ena Demir (270-745-6867 / [ena.demir@wku.edu](mailto:ena.demir@wku.edu)) or WKU's Title IX Investigator, Michael Crowe (270-745-5429 / [michael.crowe@wku.edu](mailto:michael.crowe@wku.edu)). Please note that while you may report an incident of sex/gender based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct to a KIIS program director and/or faculty member, KIIS program directors and faculty are considered "Responsible Employees" of Western Kentucky University and MUST report what you share to WKU's Title IX Coordinator or Title IX Investigator.

If you would like to speak with someone who may be able to afford you confidentiality, you may contact WKU's Counseling and Testing Center, <https://www.wku.edu/heretohelp/> at 270-745-3159.

For more information on KIIS Title IX, see <https://www.kiis.org/students/health-safety/title-ix-clery/>; additional Title IX resources can be found here <https://www.wku.edu/eeo/titleixbrochure2020.pdf>.

Everyone should be able to participate on a KIIS program, attend a KIIS event, or work in a KIIS environment (e.g. KIIS office) without fear of sexual harassment or discrimination of any kind. Be respectful of each other.