I. Course Description
ECON 455/555 DECISION, CHOICES AND THE ECONOMICS OF HAPPINESS  The objectives of this course are for students to gain an economic understanding of: (a) how people make choices; (b) how these choices affect society / policy; and (c) how choices and policies impact happiness and well-being and why that's relevant for economics. The course will expose students to a number of major topics in Behavioral Economics, and will link theory with empirical applications. The first half of the course will focus on departures from neoclassical preferences, while the latter half will cover departures from rational expectations.

Prerequisites
Suggested prerequisites: High school economics, algebra & graphing. Familiarity with basic differential calculus is a plus.

II. Textbook:
Class is readings-based. We will not follow a formal textbook.

III. Student Responsibilities

You are expected to attend every class meeting and be on time. It is your responsibility to be aware of all announcements made in class about test dates, assignment due dates, course content, test content and other course information. Some of this information may also be available on Blackboard. It is important that you check Blackboard on a daily basis.

Readings will consist of the textbook chapters and assigned articles. In the case of the latter, I will provide PDF files to print, or information on how to access them online/from the library.

Your responsibilities, like mine, include being well-prepared for class. Your job is to read the assigned readings before class and be prepared to discuss the topics. If you can’t make it to class, make sure you arrange to obtain any information you missed from classmates or me.
IV. Assessment

Your progress will be assessed by 2 exams, a group class presentation, and a final written assignment. The exams may cover any material from the assigned readings and specified text chapters, as well as any additional material that I cover in lectures. Exams will consist of essay/short-answer questions. Exams are not cumulative. There is no final exam.

*** Graduate students: You will complete one additional written assignment due after thanksgiving break. Graduate students will need to sign a graduate-credit contract with me separately. Stay tuned for further instructions. ***

The final paper is due on Monday, December 8, 2013 by 12 pm, no exceptions.

V. Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Econ 455 (Undergrad)</th>
<th>Econ 555 (Grad)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exam #1</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam #2</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Presentation</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion (class / BB)</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(For graduate students)</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grading policies and exam grades are final and not subject to negotiation.

Note: Chronic absenteeism will void the evaluation rubric stated above.

Grades will be posted on BB within 5 working days of an exam.

VI. Grading Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>96.5 and above</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>79.5 - 82.49</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>62.5 - 66.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>92.5 - 96.49</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>76.5 - 79.49</td>
<td>D-</td>
<td>59.5 - 62.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>89.5 - 92.49</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>72.5 - 76.49</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>59.49 or less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>86.5 - 89.49</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>69.5 - 72.49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>82.5 - 86.49</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>66.5 - 69.49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

VII. Class Policies

Class room Conduct: Students must attend every class session and come to class on time. It is to be noted that even though attendance is not directly factored into the grade calculations, I reserve the right to adjust a student’s grade in case of chronic absenteeism.

There are some behaviors that are not tolerated in the classroom, including - but not limited to – texting, inattention while I am lecturing, being disrespectful to me and/or fellow classmates, and other similarly disruptive conduct. Any such behavior will result in a student being asked to leave the classroom immediately.

Cell phones must be turned off or on silent mode during class. If I see anyone texting, I will deduct 5 points from the student’s next exam score – no warnings.

No e-cigs, chewing tobacco or vaping allowed during class or class related group meetings.

No pets/recreational animals in the classroom or in the building as per MBEB policy.
Email and Correspondence: College is preparation for your professional life and career. Therefore, it is necessary to use professional etiquette in your communications with others. Texting language and acronyms are not acceptable in emails addressed to me. Email messages need to be necessary, respectful (beginning with a proper address, such as “Prof. Islam” or “Dr. Islam”), concise, and clear. If you do not get an email response from me, it is likely that your email message did not meet the above guidelines.

VIII. Academic Integrity

Refer to Boise State’s Student Code of Conduct for definitions of cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty as well as policies and procedures for handling such cases which can be found at: http://www.boisestate.edu/osrr

I strongly encourage you to familiarize yourself with this policy as it is applicable to all of your classes and dealings with the University. Any student found plagiarizing; cheating; or fabricating any assignment will receive an automatic “F” for the course and be dismissed from class immediately.

IX. Disabilities:

If any student has a disability that requires special accommodation in class, for assignments, exams or any other task please come and see me by the second week of class. Information regarding disabilities and accommodations that the University can make for you are available on the Boise State University website.

X. Important Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exam 1</th>
<th>Oct 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exam 2</td>
<td>Nov 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class presentations</td>
<td>As per schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final paper due</td>
<td>Dec 8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I have the discretion to reschedule exams with due notification provided via class announcements and/or Blackboard.

XI. Some other Relevant Fall 2017 Deadlines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aug 21</th>
<th>First day of Semester</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug 25</td>
<td>Last day for faculty initiated drops for non-attendance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 25</td>
<td>Last day to register; add class, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 1</td>
<td>Last day to drop class or withdraw completely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No 20 - 26</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Vacation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 8</td>
<td>End of class instruction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

XII. Tentative Course Outline w/ List of Readings

1. Psychology of Decision-making
2. Decisions under Uncertainty & Risk (Loss Aversion & Reference-Dependent Choice)
   i. Barberis, N. “30 Years of Prospect Theory..”, JEP 2013.

3. Heuristics and Biases (Beliefs)
   
   Additional Suggested Reading:

4. Utility & Subjective Well-Being
   
   Additional Suggested Reading:

5. Cognitive Modeling (Inattention and Shrouding)
   
   Additional Suggested Reading:

6. Money and Happiness

EXAM 1 (Oct 5)
7. **Public Policy**

8. **Intertemporal Choice**

   Additional Suggested Reading:
   iii. Thaler, and Bernatzi. "Save More Tomorrow: Using Behavioral Economics to Increase Employee Saving." (PDF)

9. **Perceptions of Fairness (Labor Market)**

10. **Social Preferences & Social Dilemmas**

11. **Happiness and social media** *(with some discussion of neuroeconomics, time permitting)*
    i. Mullainathan, S., and A. Shleifer. "Media Bias."
    ii. Social Media and Fake News, JEP 2016

12. **EXAM 2 (Nov 28)**

12. **Student Team Class Presentations (3 class sessions)**

XIV. **Using Blackboard**

   Blackboard will be my primary means of out-of-class communication with you. For information concerning students’ rights and responsibilities while enrolled in online courses, please read the “Student Privacy Notice” at: [http://itc.boisestate.edu/BbSupport/BbDocs/general/PrivacyNotice.htm](http://itc.boisestate.edu/BbSupport/BbDocs/general/PrivacyNotice.htm)
**Important**: Every time you log in, check the *Announcements*, and, *Course Documents* folders.

I’ll use the email function of Blackboard 9 to notify you of any sudden changes (e.g., class cancellation). It is imperative that you keep your email addresses up-to-date AND check Blackboard every day. For technical problems: Email: blackboard@boisestate.edu

---

**Boise State University's Statement of Shared Values**

Boise State University upholds the following values as the foundation for a civil and nurturing environment. Campus community members and all who are part of COBE are expected to adhere to the following values.

**Academic Excellence** – engage in our own learning and participate fully in the academic community’s pursuit of knowledge.

**Caring** – show concern for the welfare of others.

**Citizenship** – uphold civic virtues and duties that prescribe how we ought to behave in a self-governing community by obeying laws and policies, volunteering in the community, and staying informed on issues.

**Fairness** – expect equality, impartiality, openness and due process by demonstrating a balanced standard of justice without reference to individual bias.

**Respect** – treat people with dignity regardless of who they are and what they believe. A respectful person is attentive, listens well, treats others with consideration and doesn’t resort to intimidation, coercion or violence to persuade.

**Responsibility** – take charge of our choices and actions by showing accountability and not shifting blame or taking improper credit. We will pursue excellence with diligence, perseverance, and continued improvement.

**Trustworthiness** – demonstrate honesty in our communication and conduct while managing ourselves with integrity and reliability.