



## Bachelor's courses Faculty of Humanities

VU University Amsterdam - Student- & Onderwijszaken - Exchange programme Vrije Universiteit - 2018-2019

# THINKING AND EMOTIONS

<b>Academic year</b>	2018-2019
<b>Semester</b>	2
<b>Period</b>	5
<b>Day(s)</b>	Tuesday and Thursday
<b>Time</b>	18.00-21.00
<b>Number of meetings</b>	13
<b>Dates of all meetings</b>	2, 4, 9, 11, 16, 18, 23, 25, 30 April, 2, 7, 9, 14 May 2019
<b>Location</b>	Vrije Universiteit, De Boelelaan 1105, 1081 HV Amsterdam
<b>Room</b>	will be announced later
<b>Credits</b>	6
<b>Lecturers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dr. Richard Godijn, Department of Experimental and Applied Psychology, email: <a href="mailto:r.j.godijn@vu.nl">r.j.godijn@vu.nl</a></li><li>• <a href="#">You can download the course programme here.</a></li></ul>

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

The way we think and make decisions has a fundamental effect on virtually all facets of life. Understanding real-world problems starts with an understanding of human behaviour and its underlying cognitive processes. How do we think and make decisions? What role do emotions play in our decisions? In this course human thinking and decision-making will be addressed using a theoretical framework according to which decisions can be made by either a fast automatic system, or a slow deliberate system. Several aspects of decision-making will be discussed on this basis, from heuristics and biases to overconfidence and risky choices. We will address several real world applications such as decisions in court, consumer choices, moral decisions, decisions in science, and happiness. The VU research profiles concerning human health and sustainability will further be discussed from a decision-making perspective. The course will follow the framework of the book "Thinking Fast and Slow", by Daniel Kahneman. The first five lectures will present this framework step by step and the

remaining lectures will expand upon this with various practical and theoretical applications.

### **Practical Information**

The course is suitable for students at different levels of their bachelor programme (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> year). There will be 12 meetings of lectures, discussions and presentations, followed by an exam on the 13<sup>th</sup> meeting. The first 5 meetings will focus on understanding the framework by Daniel Kahneman as presented in his book “Thinking fast and slow”. The next meetings will address various applications and will feature student group presentations. Students will be allowed to miss two meetings, but will have to catch up to the missing information.

### **Main course elements and concepts**

The course will provide a thorough understanding of the way in which humans think and make decisions and the way in which emotions influence these processes. In addition to addressing a number of practical applications, the course will address key VU research profiles from a psychological perspective:

- *Human Health and Life sciences*: Most people have at least some knowledge of what it means to live a healthy life. The risks of smoking and obesity are known. We know that a healthy life involves physical activity and restricting the consumption of certain kinds of foods and beverages. Yet, knowing what makes us healthy is not enough. It remains a challenge for many people to actually make the right decisions. We will discuss human health from a decision-making perspective. Why is it so difficult for many people to lead a healthy life?
- *Science for sustainability*: Human behaviour has allowed the environment to be degraded. We constantly make decisions that are not in the best interest of our environment. Do people just not care or is it just really hard to make decisions that are in the best interest of our planet? We will discuss sustainability from a decision-making perspective.

### **Working formats and activities**

The various topics will be addressed through lectures, demonstrations and discussions. Students will hold group presentations.

### **Relevance of the course**

Many practical problems in our society are a consequence of the way people think and make decisions. Several practical applications will be examined as well as VU research profiles related to decision-making. The course will have relevance for students from a

wide variety of disciplines for which decision-making is a relevant factor.

### **Attainment targets/learning outcomes (“eindtermen”)**

- Students will gain an understanding of an influential framework for thinking and decision-making.
- Students will be able to apply the decision-making framework to various everyday situations.
- Students will gain an understanding of the underlying decision-making factors of several societal problems.
- Students will gain an understanding of the way in which decision-making factors play a role in their own field.
- Students will gain personal insight into their own decision-making and thinking processes.

### **Study materials**

"Thinking fast and slow", by Daniel Kahneman. Additional papers to be announced.

### **Assessment methods**

- Exam 50%
- Group Presentation 30%
- Group paper 30%
- Discussion participation 20%