Choice in Context: Research Perspectives

2018-19 Academic Year
Master of Research in Economics, Finance and Management

1. Description of the subject

- Research Seminar   Code: 31914
- Total credits: 6 ECTS   Workload: 150 hours
                                               Term: 3rd

- Type of subject: Optative
- Department of Economics and Business
- Coordinator: Gaël Le Mens
- Logistics: Room TBA. Times Mondays and Tuesdays 10.30 to 12.30

- Teaching team:
  G. Cornelissen / M. Epure / G. Le Mens / D. Navarro-Martinez / H. Ramalhinho

2. Teaching guide

● **Introduction**

People routinely make choices in complex environments they do not fully understand. In such settings, they cannot consciously evaluate the available alternatives on all their attributes and then make a utility-maximizing choice. Nevertheless, people still make choices and bear the consequences of these choices. How do they manage to do this and how do they deal with this? In this research seminar, we will discuss state-of-the art knowledge about how people decide such complex environments. We will focus on a variety of environmental parameters such as the organizational environment, the position in a social network, in a status hierarchy or the political and cultural context. We will also study how additional factors such as personality, emotions, or ethical concerns affect decision-making. We will invoke a number of different theoretical perspectives (e.g. cognitive psychology & social psychology, decision science, business strategy, managerial accounting, financial reporting, operations management, organizational behavior).

Professors from multiple areas of the department will contribute to teaching the course.

Finally, there will be one session to wrap-up the course.

● **Teaching methodology**

The course is made of **5 different Themes** taught by different professors. Each professor will select some papers related to the research they will discuss – and possibly some background readings that will help you understand where the papers fit in the current state of knowledge. You will have to read these papers *carefully* before the first session of the Theme for which they are assigned**. For each theme**, you will choose one of two types of assignments:

- Option 1: Write a two-page short paper on how the assigned readings relate to your Master / MRes thesis. Explain how you can use the insights / methods / theoretical framework developed in the readings for the week inform your thesis project. If this course is to help you move forward with your own research ideas (and your thesis), this should be your preferred option.
- Option 2: Choose two of the assigned papers ('articles to be discussed'). Write a one-page commentary on each of the two papers. The commentaries should highlight: (1) the ideas (substantive and/or methodological) that you find interesting and/or (2) the problems/advantages you see in the adopted methodology. These commentaries will be shared with the professor teaching the session and should not simply summarize the papers. Instead, they should reflect *critical thinking* and *analysis* of the papers being discussed.

Unless otherwise communicated, assignments have to be sent by email to the professor by **19:00 the day before** the first session taught by this professor (typically, this will be Sunday 19:00). They will be graded by the professor in charge of the session for which they are due. (Some professors by change the due date according to circumstances).

The sessions will be run in a 'seminar' format: students will take turns in leading the discussion of the assigned papers. The professor will make sure the discussion covers the important themes for the session. He or she will also provide some perspective by situating the research being discussed in the broader literature. We will also likely do some in-class exercises about the research process (developing ideas, going from idea to research project, etc.) Finally, the

professor will give the students feedback on the commentaries they wrote in preparation for the sessions.

⚙ **Assessment and Grading System**

Your grade for the course will be made of two components:
- 50%: Average of the top N-1 assignments (out of N assignments – with N equal to the number of themes, i.e., 5).
- 50%: Participation in the sessions (each professor will give you a participation grade for their session(s) – Please make sure to use a nametag so that professors can learn your names).

These grades will be averaged with a weight corresponding to the number of sessions taught each professor (typically 3-4 sessions). The readings for each session will be made available on the BGSE intranet.

3. Schedule (tentative)

(Monday – Tuesday from10:30 to 12:30)

- Introduction (01/04 – 1 Session). Gert Cornelissen (gert.cornelissen@upf.edu)
- Theme # 1: Judgments in contexts: Rational choice, cognitive biases and information sampling (6 sessions). Gaël Le Mens (gael.le-mens@upf.edu)
- Theme # 2: Prescriptive Analytics for Logistics and Supply Chain Management (3 sessions). Helena Ramalhinho (helena.ramalhinho@upf.edu)
- Theme # 3: Governance and control systems in organizations (4 sessions). Mircea Epure (mircea.epure@upf.edu)
- Theme # 4: The role of emotions in decision-making processes (3 sessions). Daniel Navarro-Martinez. (daniel.navarro@upf.edu)
- Theme #5: Moral and ethics in decision-making (3 sessions). Gert Cornelissen (gert.cornelissen@upf.edu).