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BE917 - Decision Making, Spring 2026

Learn more about theories and practices of decision making, and be better prepared to face future challenges of decision making as an individual, in groups, and in businesses and other organizations. As a side effect, you will get new perspectives on the decision making of family and friends.

This course starts off by discussing individual decision making and your own experiences. We next turn to group decision making, and then to decision making in businesses and other organizations. The course covers decision making in the everyday as well as decision making during crisis and across the public-private divide.

The course is interdisciplinary in nature and involves cases and case-analysis seminars in addition to more lecture style classes with integrated discussions.

New for this year is that there will be an opt-in half-day workshop in late February.

Please note that details on e.g. assignments, the workshop, and other news and up-dates will be provided only on the Canvas platform!

Intended Learning Outcomes

Having completed the course, the successful participants will be able to:

- apply decision theory to a variety of practices of complex decision making in business firms and other organizations - in everyday situations and during crisis,
- examine the wider context of strategic decision making and evaluate the extent to which important contingencies for such decision making may be altered (e.g. through lobbying),
- reflect upon their own roles in processes of decision making (e.g. through knowledge of how bounded rationality influences the capacity of individuals in decision making) and make illustrations of it and express the insights by using course theories,
- explain how and why “implementation problems” may arise, and to what extent and how such problems may be addressed,
- describe the range of other functions that decisions can fulfil (apart from being choices of particular courses of action), and how these alternative functions may affect decision making in practice.

Content and Topics

Individual Decision Making The experience of participants as individual decision makers and as students at the SSE and elsewhere is used as a starting point for introducing theories of decision making. We explore the merits and limits of the idea of the “rational decision maker”, a model of decision making that many students have met in various previous courses in e.g. marketing, management, and economics. We also discuss the cultural boundedness of individual decision making. Highlighting the interrelatedness of individual- and organizational decision making, we

further probe a set of issues to do with employee silence and ethics.

Group Decision Making Group decision making is both similar and different to that of individuals. The assigned decision maker in a group may not have access to all relevant knowledge, and different types of knowledge available may also clash. How may such situations be resolved? Another topic discussed is the concept of “groupthink”, a form of group-based irrationality. Here we include an alternative take on how and why it may arise. We also consider problems related to group composition and devote some time to discuss the evaluation of small group performance.

Organizational Decision Making Turning to decision making in businesses and other organizations we discuss the various functions of decisions and decision making. We further outline the so-called Garbage Can model and discuss how decision making within messier "Organized Anarchies" differ from that in more rational organizations.

Decision making becomes increasingly complex during crises. On the subject of crisis decision making, we look into models on crisis communication and the interrelationship between crisis- and risk management. This includes ideas on crisis/risk and narratives as well as crisis/risk in the supply chain.

The course concludes with a section on the role of business and other organizations in the formation of public policy and political decision making. Here, we explore the wider conditions for decision making, and the possibilities of affecting the “rules of the game” through lobbying. In terms of theory, we draw on the Kingdon model on Agenda Setting (which, in turn, is based on the Garbage Can model). We also add insights on venue shopping.

Pedagogical Structure

The course has a multi-method approach to learning, inside and outside the class room. The average class session is built around a mix of traditional lecturing (where the literature is outlined and tricky concepts explained), discussions (on the topics at hand) and in-class group work.

We further use four business cases and similar as means to practice applying course theory to practice during the designated case-analysis seminars. In addition, there is an opt-in themed half-day workshop.

Please Note! Details on the themes for each session, how to prepare etc. will be made visible and linked in Canvas in the schedule on the *Syllabus* page.

At the end of the course there is a written exam (see *Examination* for further details on all parts of the examination, including seminar attendance)

Course director

Svedberg Helgesson, Karin

ECTS credits

7.50

Start semester

Spring 2026, first period

Information

CIVICA Course (BSc programs)

Elective Course (BSc BE)

Department

Department of Management and Organization

Course Improvement

The most recent feedback from students was overall very positive and has not resulted in any major changes.

As this course has moved to the spring semester as of 2026, and was taught also at the end of the fall semester 2025, there has been some alterations for practical and pedagogical reasons. Notably, in 2026 there is no group project. Instead, there is an additional Case Analysis Seminar with an associated individual assignment. There is also a new opt-in half-day Workshop.

Updated 2025-10-23

Updated 2025-11-14

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Brunsson, Nils (1990), 'Deciding for Responsibility and Legitimation', *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, (15) 1/2: 47-59.

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Cohen, Michael D., James G. March & Johan P. Olsen (1972), 'A Garbage Can Model of Organizational Choice', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, (17)1:1-25. **Excerpt pp. 1-11.**

Contacts

Frey, Dieter & Felix C. Brodbeck (2004), 'Group Processes in Organizations', *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 6407-6413.

Participants

Hale, Joanne E., Ronald E. Dulek & David P. Hale (2005), 'Crisis Response Communication Challenges: Building Theory from Qualitative Data', *Journal of Business Communication*, (42) 2:112-134.

Hayes, Jan & Sarah Maslen (2015). Knowing stories that matter: learning for effective safety decision-making. *Journal of Risk Research*, 18(6), 714-726.

Harrison, Debbie, C-F Helgesson, and Karin Svedberg Helgesson (2019) 'Invasive species, risk management, and the compliance industry: The case of Daro Marine', In R. P. Gephart Jr., C. C. Miller & K.S. Helgesson (Eds), *The Routledge Companion to Risk, Crisis and Emergency Management*, New York: Routledge, 283-295.

Iyengar, Sheena S. & Mark R. Lepper (1999), 'Rethinking the Value of Choice: A Cultural perspective on Intrinsic Motivation', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 76, 3: 49-366.

Kahneman, Daniel (2003), 'Maps of Bounded Rationality: Psychology for Behavioral Economics', *The American Economic Review*, (93) 5: **NB! Excerpt: pp. 1449-1461 + 1469-1470.**

Manias, Elisabeth & Annette Street (2001), 'The Interplay of Knowledge and Decision Making between Nurses and Doctors in Critical Care', *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 38:129-140.

Milliken, Frances J., Elizabeth W. Morrison & Patricia F. Hewlin (2003) 'An Exploratory Study of Employee Silence: Issues that Employees Don't Communicate Upward and Why', *Journal of Management Studies*, 40: 1453-1476.

Pralle, Sarah B. (2003), 'Venue Shopping, Political Strategy, and Policy Change: The Internationalization of Canadian Forest Advocacy', *Journal of Public Policy*, (23) 3: 233-260.

Pralle, Sarah B. (2009) Agenda-setting and climate change, *Environmental Politics*, (18)5: 781-799.

Sheffi, Yossi (2019), 'Spatial and Temporal Patterns in Global Enterprise Risk', In R. P. Gephart Jr., C. C. Miller & K.S. Helgesson (Eds), *The Routledge Companion to Risk, Crisis and Emergency Management*, New

York: Routledge, 283-295.

Umphress, Elizabeth E. & John B. Bingham (2011) 'When Employees Do Bad Things for Good Reasons: Examining Unethical Pro-Organizational Behaviors', *Organization Science*, 22: 3: 621-640.

Whyte, Glen (1998), 'Recasting Janis's Groupthink Model: The Key Role of Efficacy in Decision Fiascos', *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 2/3: 185-209.

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The maximum score on the course is 100p. In order to pass, students need to fulfill the attendance requirements, and have a minimum total score of at least 50p on the Individual Written Exam.

 Examination

The use of ChatGPT or other GenAI tools for any submitted course work will be considered grounds for cheating. In line with this, it is not allowed to submit materials from the course into GenAI tools (this includes assignments, slides, hand-outs, course readings, etc.) If you have any questions regarding whether a particular tool or activity is allowed, double-check with the Course Director in advance.

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Attendance (pass/fail)

Attendance is recommended throughout the course.

The following interactive discussion and feedback sessions are compulsory:

- **Case Analysis Seminars (compulsory attendance)** During these seminars, we apply course theories to business cases and similar, based on your individual preparations. For each of the 4 case-analysis seminars, full attendance is based on being present and active at the seminar, and on having up-loaded the individual brief *case preparation* (500-600 word) by the assigned deadline (please see Assignments for details)

Workshop (opt-in)

The course offers a themed half-day workshop on decision making. The half-day *Workshop* is scheduled for *Tuesday, February 24*.

Students should sign up by TBD in order to participate.

Students who attend and actively participate in the Workshop may answer only 2 questions (out of 3) during the Exam (see further below). These 2 questions will then carry equal weight in the grading of the Exam.

Individual Written Exam (100p)

At the end of the course there is an individual on-site exam. The 3-hour exam consists of three questions. The 3 questions carry equal weight in the grading of the Exam.

Please note! Students who have attended and actively participated in the half-day Workshop may answer only 2 questions (out of 3) during the Exam. These 2 questions then carry equal weight in the grading of the Exam.

Questions are designed to cut across course themes and articles in the readings. A question may consist of one or more sub-questions.

The exam is scheduled TBD.

Updated 2026-01-09

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Information on this page was retrieved from the booking system TimeEdit.

[Simulate schedule »](#)

January 21, 2026

13:15-14:00 | Room: A133

Introduction

January 22, 2026

10:15-12:00 | Room: A133

Lecture

13:15-15:00 | Room: A336

Lecture

January 27, 2026

10:15-12:00 | Room: A133

Lecture

January 29, 2026

10:15-12:00 | Room: A542

Lecture

13:15-15:00 | Room: A133

Seminar

February 2, 2026

10:15-12:00 | Room: B310

Lecture

February 4, 2026

10:15-12:00 | Room: A542

Lecture

February 10, 2026

10:15-12:00 | Room: A133

Seminar

13:15-15:00 | Room: A133

Lecture

February 12, 2026

10:15-12:00 | Room: A138

Lecture

February 17, 2026

10:15-12:00 | Room: A138

Lecture

13:15-15:00 | Room: A138

Lecture

February 19, 2026

10:15-12:00 | Room: A138

Lecture

13:15-15:00 | Room: A542

Lecture

February 24, 2026

10:15-12:00 | Room: A542

Workshop

13:15-15:00 | Room: A542

Workshop

March 3, 2026

10:15-12:00 | Room: A542

Seminar

March 5, 2026

10:15-12:00 | Room: A542

Seminar

March 10, 2026

12:15-13:00 | Room: A542

Lecture

March 20, 2026

09:00-12:00

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Course Director

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