

ECON 490
Behavioral Economics**Course Syllabus****Course Overview**

This course will focus on the intersection of Behavioral and Experimental economics using field experiments, lab experiments, and tests of theory to answer policy and social issue questions.

The course will be taught seminar-style, with lectures on the behavioral economics literature studying decision-making and strategic interactions and interactive presentations of original research. Students are expected to attend all class meetings and play an active role in class discussions.

Semester: Fall 2026

Meeting Times: Monday and Wednesday, 8:00 - 9:20am in 215 David Kinley Hall

Instructor:

Dr. Lena Song

Office: 101D, David Kinley Hall

lenasong@illinois.edu

Office hours: Friday 2 pm – 3:30 pm, by appointment

Topics:

This is an ambitious list of topics for the semester. We might not get through all of it if some topics take more time than expected, and that is OK.

- Risk Preferences and Mental Accounting
- Time Preferences
- Social Preferences
- Attention
- Strategic Interactions and Markets
- Learning and Persuasion
- Incentives and Labor Markets
- Finance and Emotions
- Industrial Organization
- Political Economy
- Media and Digital Technologies
- Experimental Design and Methods

Useful Textbook:

There is no standard behavioral economics textbook. So, most of the material will come from the lecture. Required and optional reading will be posted to Canvas at least a week before the topic is covered.

The following text is encouraged:

Camerer, C. F., Loewenstein, G., and Rabin, M. *Advances in Behavioral Economics*, New York, Princeton University Press, 2004.

Learning Resources:

Lecture slides, assignments, and additional materials will be posted on Canvas. The posted material will not contain everything discussed in class. Regular attendance is expected and is part of the participation grade.

Students are encouraged to utilize the many resources available throughout campus to assist with academics. We recommend that you seek them out starting early in the semester, not just in times of academic need, in order to develop good study habits and submit work that represents your full academic potential. Information about Economics academic and student support, including the Raphael Kiam Economics Learning Center and other campus resources, is available at <https://economics.illinois.edu/academics/undergraduate-program/academic-student-support>.

Practice Assignments

Students will complete practice assignments designed to reinforce material from class and prepare for the in-class quizzes. Assignments are due on Fridays and must be uploaded to Canvas **before 11 a.m. CT on the stated due date**.

In-Class Quizzes

Short quizzes will be given in class throughout the semester. Quizzes will cover material from lectures, readings, and practice assignments.

In-Class Participation

Active participation is an important part of the course. Participation includes attending class, completing other students' in-class surveys, submitting questions or comments on other groups' research presentations, and contributing to class activities.

Research Paper Presentation and Survey Workshop

Students will select a research paper related to one of the topics covered in the course. In groups of 2-3, students will present the paper to the class, explaining the research question and behavioral mechanism, research design, main findings, and key outcome measures, as well as discussing limitations and a possible extension.

Each group will also design a short survey related to the topic of the paper. The survey will be administered to classmates during class. Groups will use classmates' responses and feedback to revise their survey and reflect on what worked, what respondents misunderstood, and the main limitations of their survey design. After the workshop, each group will submit a short final report summarizing the survey, its results, the feedback received, any revisions made, and the main remaining limitations.

Final Research Project

By yourself or in a small group, you will work on a final project that develops an original research question on a topic of your choice related to behavioral economics. The project must include original data collection and analysis and should use an appropriate research design to answer the question.

Each student or group will give a final presentation of the research project.

Undergraduate students: You or your group will submit a 2–4 page research summary. The summary is due on the last day of class.

Master's students: You or your group will submit a 10–20 page research paper. The paper should be structured as a standard scientific article, including an introduction, relevant literature, research design and procedures, results, discussion, and conclusion. The paper is due on the last day of class.

Grading

The final course grade will be determined as follows:

- Practice assignments: 10%
- In-class quizzes: 25%
- In-class participation: 10%
- Research paper presentation and survey workshop: 20%
- Final research project: 35%

The numeric grade can be translated to letter grades as follows:

100-97% A+	<97%-93% A	<93-90% A-	
<90-87% B+	<87-83% B	<83-80% B-	
<80-77% C+	<77-73% C	<73-70% C-	
<70-67% D+	<67-63% D	<63-60% D-	<60% F

Please note that assessment grades are final. If you believe a calculation error has occurred or if you have a legitimate reason to question your grade, you may submit a regrade request. However, please note the following:

- Regrade requests must be submitted in writing within one week of receiving the grade. After this period, no regrade requests will be considered.
- When a regrade request is submitted, the entire assignment or assessment may be re-evaluated, which means your grade could go up, down, or remain the same. This ensures fairness and accuracy in grading, and we encourage you to carefully review your work before requesting a regrade.
- Grades assigned after a re-evaluation are final.

Course Policies

Late Policy: Practice assignments are an important part of the course. Please check Canvas regularly for posted assignments and verify due dates.

Missed assignments or quizzes will not be rescheduled and will only be excused without penalty if the absence is due to a verifiable emergency or another reason that the University officially recognizes as legitimate. In that case, the weight of the missed assessment will be reallocated across other assessments in the same category. Unexcused missed assignments or quizzes will receive a score of 0. If you anticipate a conflict, please communicate with me as early as possible, and I will work with you to find a solution within University guidelines.

Quiz Policy: Quizzes will be administered in person and are closed book. Internet-connected devices, including phones and computers, may not be used. Calculators are allowed except for models that can access the internet. If you have questions about whether your calculator is allowed, please contact me.

Academic Integrity: According to the Student Code, "It is the responsibility of each student to refrain from infractions of academic integrity, from conduct that may lead to suspicion of such infractions, and from conduct that aids others in such infractions." Please know that it is my responsibility as an instructor to uphold the academic integrity policy of the University, which can be found here: <https://studentcode.illinois.edu/article1/part4/1-401/>

Academic dishonesty may result in a failing grade. Every student is expected to review and abide by

the Academic Integrity Policies. It is your responsibility to read this policy to avoid any misunderstanding. Do not hesitate to ask the instructor(s) if you are ever in doubt about what constitutes plagiarism, cheating, or any other breach of academic integrity. **Read the full Student Code at <https://studentcode.illinois.edu/>**

Use of Generative AI

Generative AI tools may be used for practice assignments and research projects for brainstorming, research assistance, coding, data analysis, and editing unless specific assignment instructions state otherwise. AI may not be used during in-class quizzes. You are responsible for all work you submit: you must understand and be able to explain it, verify the accuracy of facts, citations, code, and analyses, and acknowledge material use of AI. Do not upload confidential, personally identifiable, or otherwise sensitive research data to public AI tools. Use of AI that is inconsistent with these rules constitutes a violation of academic integrity.

Students with Disabilities

To obtain disability-related academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the course instructor and the Disability Resources and Educational Services (DRES) as soon as possible. To contact DRES, visit 1207 S. Oak St., Champaign, call 217-333-1970, email disability@illinois.edu, or go to <https://go.illinois.edu/DRES>.

Community of Care

As members of the Illinois community, we each have a responsibility to express care and concern for one another. If you come across a classmate whose behavior concerns you, whether in regard to their well-being or yours, we encourage you to refer the concern to the Connie Frank CARE Center in the Office of the Dean of Students at 217-333-0050 or through <https://odos.illinois.edu/community-of-care/CAREcenter>. The CARE Center can also support students facing challenges that interfere with coursework and connect them with campus and community resources. Mental health support is available through the Counseling Center (217-333-3704; <https://counselingcenter.illinois.edu/>) and McKinley Health Center (<https://mckinley.illinois.edu/>).

If you need immediate assistance or are in immediate danger, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room. During business hours, the Counseling Center offers same-day urgent meetings without an appointment; if possible, call 217-333-3704 before arriving. After hours, call the Rosecrance Crisis Line at 815-720-4953.

Religious Observances

It is the policy of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign to reasonably accommodate students' religious beliefs, observances, and practices that conflict with class attendance or participation in a scheduled examination or work requirement, consistent with state and federal law. Students should request accommodations in advance of the conflict to allow time for consideration of the request and preparation of alternate procedures. Requests should be directed to the instructor. The Office of the Dean of Students provides an optional resource to assist students in making such requests at <https://odos.illinois.edu/resources/students/religious-observances>.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

Any student who has suppressed their directory information pursuant to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) should self-identify to the instructor to ensure protection of the privacy of their attendance in this course. See <https://registrar.illinois.edu/academic-records/ferpa/> for more information. Student information and records will not be released to anyone other than the student unless the student has provided written approval or as required by law.

Sex-Based Misconduct Reporting Obligation

The University of Illinois is committed to combating sex-based misconduct. Faculty and staff members are required to report instances of sex-based misconduct to the University's Title IX Office. The Title IX

Office will provide information about rights and options, including accommodations, support services, the campus disciplinary process, and law enforcement options. Information about confidential resources is available at <https://wecare.illinois.edu/resources/students/#confidential>.

Other information about resources and reporting is available at <https://wecare.illinois.edu/>.

Disruptive Behavior

Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students' ability to learn and an instructor's ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office for Student Conflict Resolution (217-333-3680; conflictresolution@illinois.edu; <https://conflictresolution.illinois.edu/>).

Emergency Response Recommendations

Emergency response recommendations and campus building floor plans are available at <https://police.illinois.edu/em/run-hide-fight/>. Students are encouraged to review this information within the first 10 days of class.

Veterans and Military Students

As a military-friendly institution, the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign has established policies and procedures to accommodate military-connected students. Members of the National Guard or Reserves and active-duty military personnel with military obligations such as deployments, training, or drills are encouraged to communicate these obligations to the instructor in advance whenever possible. Support is available through the Chez Veterans Center at <https://chezveteranscenter.ahs.illinois.edu/>. University policy regarding excused absences and departure for U.S. military or other U.S. national defense services is available at <https://studentcode.illinois.edu/article3/part3/3-313/>.