

# Behavioral Economics: Re-vamped for Late Spring

Instructor: Simon D. Halliday

Smith College, Spring 2020, Post-Recess

**This syllabus is preliminary and subject to change.**

## Contact & Admin Details

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## Exordium

Before anything else, I wish us all fortitude, compassion, and generosity. We shall now endeavor to complete our semester – for many of you your final semester at Smith College – from a distance. Notwithstanding physical distance, I hope what we do together as a class brings us closer. We shall further our understanding of behavioral economics in social interactions, in the workplace, and in other topics of your collective choosing (given that I have cut down on some of our content). I'm navigating what it means to expect a team project while working online and we're going to work on this together as we proceed to manage our joint expectations. Best of luck to us all. Let us all both moderate our expectations of what we can get done this semester, while also expecting the best of each other in tough times.

## Revised Methods of Instruction

What to say here? Well the course was once lecture- and discussion-based. Now, I plan to base it on you reading at home, online face-to-face discussions, online discussions in Slack, short videos I record and that you can watch asynchronously, and more. We shall see. We shall adapt as we go.

## Texts

### Textbook

I'm moving away from using the textbook because I'm not sure whether you all have access to it any more. I have set up a poll online to see if you have the textbook and if it's reasonable for me to refer to it.

### Papers

We're mostly going to rely on readings I post to Perusall for the given topics. These will be academic readings related to the specific topics we shall cover for the rest of the semester.

### Supplementary Readings

Despite your not having the main texts, I'm still recruiting the following texts to help you out. They are all available free of charge online through Moodle/Perusall or elsewhere.

1. Bowles and Halliday (forthcoming 2020, OUP) is a text in intermediate microeconomics that you can use to review ideas. Bowles and Halliday, *Microeconomics: Competition, Conflict and Coordination* is a forthcoming (2020) textbook in intermediate microeconomics. You can access the pdf of the draft of the book on Moodle. I will refer to it mostly to remind you of ideas you should remember from intermediate microeconomics.
2. Plott (2007) is for understanding the basics of different experimental designs. Charles Plott, 2007, *Markets, Games and Strategic Behavior*, Pearson. Note, a draft .pdf of this book is available various places online and I will refer to the draft version most of the time.
3. Golemund and Wickham (2016) is to supplement the work you do in basic data science toward replicating and producing your own statistical results. Golemund and Wickham, 2016, *R for Data Science*, available free of charge online at [r4ds.had.co.nz](http://r4ds.had.co.nz).
4. Kieran Healy (2018) teaches in-depth data visualization. Healy, 2018, is available in draft form online at <https://kieranhealy.org/publications/dataviz/>

### RStudio Primers

We shall use [RStudio Primers](#) for this course for you to do exercises and learn the basics of R. I'm going to check in with you as you do more of these alongside our labs.

## Course Schedule

**This Course Schedule is Preliminary and Subject to Change** Below is my revised course schedule for the next few weeks until the end of semester, starting from 30 March 2020.

Date	Week	Topic	Reading	Lab/Exp	Assignment
3/31-4/1	Week 8	Social preferences (cont.)	Readings	Lab 4	Midterm Exercise 1 Due
4/7-9	Week 9	Personnel econ	Readings	Lab 5	Midterm Exercise 2 Due
4/14-16	Week 10	Personnel econ	Readings		Midterm Exercise 3 Due
4/21-23	Week 11	TBD	TBD	Project	Midterm Exercise 4 Due
4/28-30	Week 12	TBD	TBD	Project	-
5/4-8	Week 13	Presentations and Reports		-	Project Due

I've put in TBD, because I really want to solicit your opinions. I had previously included three topics:

1. Gender
2. Happiness and Utility
3. Behavioral Public Policy

I hope we can decide on which of the topics above you would like to include in the last half of the semester.

Why did I include Personnel Economics?

- some of my own research falls in this area and I think it's interesting
- it relates to behavioral public policy and I think it's a decent substitute if we don't get that far
- there are some nice short papers I know whereas the public policy papers I know well tend to be much longer

## Assessment

The following table summarizes the different aspects of the course's assessment.

Assessment	Percentage	Cumulative
Class Participation	10%	10%
Reading summaries	10%	20%
Midterm exercises	25%	45%
Team Project	20%	65%
Project Reflection & Lit Review	10%	75%
Experiment Reports	10%	85%
Lab exercises	15%	100%

- *Class Participation*: Class participation will be based on your participation on Perusall (see below), in your group Slack and Google doc, on the general Slack, etc.
- *In-group shared reading summaries*: You'll post your reading summaries to Slack in groups.
- *Midterm exercise*: We're no longer having the full take-home midterm as originally planned. Instead, I'm splitting the original midterm into four exercises that you'll do over several weeks. I hope to get *all* of the exercises to you at the same time so that you can do them at your own pace if you'd like to get them all done quickly, but you will have to hand them in in sequence so there are deadlines for each exercise. I can give you leeway on the due date for handing in two of the four exercises if you need it, but I would like you to commit to handing in at least two of the exercises on or before the scheduled due date (these are all listed on Moodle and you have over four weeks to complete them all).
- *Team Project*: In teams of 4 you will consider a question in behavioral economics that you can use data to evaluate. We shall talk more about this as the rest of the semester progresses.
- *Final presentation*: I'm going to try to work out whether you can still do a presentation in the final scheduled week. I don't know how to make it work yet, but I'm hoping that combining Google Slides + Zoom will allow us to do something that works.
- *Lab Exercises*: We're continuing with these. They will still be graded Complete/Incomplete. If you complete it, you get the point. If not, then not. Similarly for RStudio Primers where completing the exercises is what's important. If you feel like you already know the content, then let me know and we can credit you out of specific homeworks (your backgrounds with R are quite diverse) and we can arrange an **alternative** task for you (again, you are a diverse bunch). I'm going to have some time in class face to face to do the lab, but I'm also going to ask you to do it by yourself *or* recommend that you do it with a Zoom call with classmates. Feel free to coordinate this on Slack so I get a sense of what you're doing and with whom you're doing it. ## Zoom We'll use Zoom (which we tested before break) as a way to access synchronous discussions and class time. I shall record these. Initially, I

shall endeavor to record them using Zoom's cloud technology, which we can then view with Smith log-ins. If that doesn't work, I'll record videos locally and upload them to a private YouTube Channel.

## Moodle & Slack

The main way we'll communicate will be via Slack (not email, not Moodle). I'll upload documents to Moodle as a back-up, but all readings will be on Perusall (see below) and I want you to discuss readings in your teams and in the general slack channels corresponding to the related topics.

## Slack

You are all already on our [Slack](#) workspace We're going to lean more heavily on Slack during the rest of the semester than we did during the first half of the semester.

- Please contribute to the chats about the diverse array of topics we'll discuss – start threads, respond with emojis, clip parts of papers you're not sure about, do all the things.
- Remember, participating on Slack will now be a part of your **participation grade**.
- You're already members of a channel for your team project.
- I'll be creating channels for each remaining topics we hope to cover in the semester, e.g. #socialpreferences, #personnelecon, etc.
- Feel free to post silly, fun, uplifting stuff about what you're up to in #random. I shall do the same.

## Perusall

We shall use Perusall to annotate readings in the cloud.

- Got to [perusall.com](https://perusall.com).
- Sign in with your smith.edu email.
- Once you've signed in, you'll be asked for a code for a course and the code is: HALLIDAY-KLW9J for our behavioral economics course. The site isn't *fully* populated with readings yet, but it will be soon.

Please annotate the readings **publicly** so others can see the comments you make or questions you ask. We'll work together to ensure everyone understands better this way.

## YouTube

I've created an EC0254 Channel on YouTube here: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLSJtrhCuof5bqBZp4knN8H10bI0rr493o> (Yes,

that's the full url on purpose). Please subscribe to the channel as I'll be posting new content to that channel. I'll also post it to the #video channel on Slack.

## Team Project Deadlines

You have a few deadlines that I have imposed on your Team Research Project.

- initial meeting with me via Zoom after spring recess
- initial literature review submission
- confirm data import & initial replication exercise
- team final presentation
- final submission of project

How would I recommend you allocate tasks and monitor each other? Recently, I've come to really appreciate an app called [Trello](#). It allows you to create boards for tasks that can include checklists and which team members can monitor for progress. I highly recommend a tool like this for your team project (and do share your board with me if you create one; we can discuss this).

## Stats Prep & Spinelli Center

Mr. Osman Keshawar is the [statistics consultant](#) at the Spinelli Center. He can coach you on the use of Excel, Stata and R. If you want a virtual appointment with him then email [spinelli@smith.edu](mailto:spinelli@smith.edu). From what I understand, he will still be available for consultations during this new post-Spring recess period.