



Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Psychology

Syllabus

The psychology of decision making and critical evaluation

Course Code:	PSAM02
Course Title:	The psychology of decision making and critical evaluation <i>Besluts- och bedömningspsykologi</i>
Credits:	7.5
Degree Level:	Master's level
Progressive Specialisation:	Second cycle, has only first-cycle course/s as entry requirements (A1N)

Major Field of Study:
PSA (Psychology)

Course Approval

The syllabus was approved by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences 2025-09-05, and is valid from the Spring semester 2026 at Karlstad University.

Prerequisites

A Bachelor degree of at least 180 ECTS credits, with 90 ECTS credits in Psychology, including an independent project of at least 15 ECTS credits at the G2E level, and upper secondary level Swedish 3 and English 6 or Swedish level 3 and English level 2, or equivalent

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students should be able to:

1. give an account of key theories that shed light on how people make judgments and decisions,
2. give an account of how individual, situational, emotional, motivational, social, and cultural factors can influence judgments and decisions, and

3. apply and discuss how decision-making environments can be designed, using psychological insights, to make it easier for people to make good choices.

Content

The aim of the course is to increase understanding of how knowledge, including its validity, can be assessed, how decision-making processes work, and what factors influence decision-makers. There is no simple formula for making good decisions, but research can point the way toward better decision-making. The course provides fundamental knowledge about the importance of psychological factors in decision-making, such as fake news, science denial, and conspiracy theories. In addition to decisions made individually, the course addresses theories of social decision-making, such as group decisions. The course includes the following: an overview of decision-making theories; cognitive theories on information gathering, attitudes, heuristics, and cognitive biases; the influence of emotional factors on decision-making; and the influence of social psychological factors on decision-making.

Students are expected to participate actively in shaping the course content through seminar discussions and other learning activities throughout the course. The course requires self-study, continuous reading, and active, reflective participation in group discussions.

Reading List

See separate document.

Examination

Assessment is based on written and oral, individual and group assignments presented and discussed in seminars.

If students have a decision from Karlstad University entitling them to Targeted Study Support due to a documented disability, the examiner has the right to give such students an adapted examination or to examine them in a different manner.

Grades

One of the grades Distinction (VG), Pass (G), or Fail (U) is awarded in the examination of the course.

Quality Assurance

Follow-up relating to learning conditions and goal-fulfilment takes place both during and upon completion of the course in order to ensure continuous improvement. Course evaluation is partly based on student views and experiences obtained in accordance with current regulations and partly on other data and documentation. Students will be informed of the result of the evaluation and of any measures to be taken.

Course Certificate

A course certificate will be provided upon request.

Additional information

The local regulations for studies at the Bachelor and Master levels at Karlstad University stipulate the obligations and rights of students and staff.