

Syllabus
Fairness
CCOL-UH 1056 EQ
SPRING 2019
NYU Abu Dhabi

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Time and Location: 2:40 PM - 3:55 PM M W C2-W007

Office Hours: Monday 4:00-5:00 PM

Textbook/Materials: No textbook required. Readings will be based on journal articles, news articles, and other sources.

Course Description

What is fair and what is unfair? Is fairness universal? Are equality and fairness synonyms? How can we build a fairer world? Anyone can recall a situation when someone exclaimed, "That's not fair!" Whether arguing with your roommate about the upkeep of common areas, viewing the daily news, or analyzing fiscal policies, people often disagree on what constitutes a fair process or outcome. The plurality of fairness ideals may lead to breakdown in negotiations, social conflict, or other undesirable outcomes. Social stability is at risk when systems are perceived as unfair. Potential business partners may fail to collaborate if they cannot agree on a compensation system that properly rewards efforts and employees may withhold labor or even sabotage production if they feel treated unfairly. On the upside, a shared sense of fairness may lead to mutually beneficial interactions, social cohesion, and smooth political decision-making processes. This Colloquium draws from disciplines including philosophy, psychology, political science, economics, and organizational behavior to question our own notions and judgments and arrive at a holistic understanding of fairness as a concept.

Course Objectives

General Objective

This course will formally define and characterize the concept of fairness. We will make use of the conceptual framework learned throughout the course to analyze current and historical events, to argue in favor and against public policies according to the different ideals and components of fairness, and to understand how differing views may affect economic, political, and social outcomes. A special emphasis will be placed on social experiments designed to measure and identify fairness in human interactions.

Specific Learning Goals

1. Distinguish between fairness of outcomes, opportunities, and procedures.
2. Differentiate between inequity and inequality. Students will learn about the psychological theory of inequity and will be able to apply the concepts to organizational settings (employee compensation and profit-sharing for example.)
3. Analyze how fairness notions vary depending on the observer's position or involvement in a social interaction. Contrast between first party and third party fairness judgements and reflect on the concept of self-serving bias.
4. Recognize the similarities and differences between women and men in fairness assessments.
5. Evaluate the evidence of fairness concerns in other mammals and limitations of humans to comprehend fairness notions in other species.
6. Critically evaluate the experimental methodology as a tool for identifying and measuring fairness.

Assessment and Grading

Participation (10%)

A key ingredient of this course is active participation. Examples of active participation are:

- Asking questions related to the learning materials.
- Relating the course material to current events.
- Helping in answering questions others might have about the learning material.
- Commenting, based on grounded arguments, about the deficiencies or unanswered questions in the learning materials.
- During your peer's presentations (last week), asking questions or offering alternative points of view which demonstrate interest and understanding of what is being presented.

Coming to class unprepared and without having read the material beforehand is not acceptable. Notes will be taken of each meeting in order to track students' engagement.

Quizzes and weekly Assignments (20%)

Quizzes will be unannounced and will take no more than 10 minutes. They will take place at the beginning of class. Typically a quiz consists of one reading comprehension question based on the materials assigned for the meeting, but questions may relate to previous material as well. There will be approximately 6 quizzes.

Weekly assignments are to be turned in at the beginning of the second weekly meeting. These should be between 500 and 600 words. There are two types:

1. A reflection of how the concepts learned apply to their daily life, a current political event, or a feature of their cultural background. Weeks: 1,2,4,5,8.
2. A reflection on the experimental methodology implemented in the readings. Please refer to the "*Guide to evaluate Experiments*" which has been uploaded to the course page. Weeks 3,7,10,12.

Each quiz and assignment counts equally.

Short Writing Assignment (20%)

Students will search for a current event for which one can analyze the situation by applying concepts of fairness that have been discussed in the course. The main goal is to underscore how the plurality of fairness notions may affect societal outcomes. Although students are encouraged to search for issues that are of global relevance, situations that are local to their country of origin or community are also admissible. Examples of broad categories of current events are:

- Conflict or war
- Climate change mitigation policies
- Taxation and fiscal policy
- Government spending and budget decisions (education, health)
- Economic regulation for businesses
- High profile lawsuits (between countries for example), publicized legal cases
- Trade agreements and negotiations
- Affirmative action

The assignment will consist of three parts.

1. **Description of the problem.** In this section you will explain your selected topic in a concise and self-contained manner. This means that a reader who is not familiar at all with the situation should be able to understand it by reading this section. In your writing, you should address these questions: Who are the parties involved? Are they bystanders or directly affected by the situation? What outcome does each party argue in favor of? Make sure you properly cite multiple sources.
2. **Applying concepts and “playing roles”.** Above you were asked to describe the parties involved, and in this section you will identify different concepts and fairness components of at most two of the parties you identified. Find arguments to defend each position as “fair”. Relate this arguments to the concepts that have been discussed in the readings.
3. **Conclusion.** Provide your personal assessment and what you would consider to be a fair solution or outcome. Make sure you provide a basis for your arguments that reflects an understanding of the concepts that we have studied.

Your essay should be between 1500 and 2000 words.

Debate (5%)

In week 7 we will have a debate over the fairness of several current issues. I will form groups of 2 or 3 students and you will be assigned a topic and a side that you should defend. The topics will be selected according to current events so they are not yet defined, but will be posted in advance. The professor will moderate the debate, the ground rules will be made clear in class. Everyone must participate actively when called to do so.

Midterm Written Exam (20%)

There will be only one exam which will take place in the 9th week (see timeline for exact date). The goal of the exam is to evaluate your ability identify, apply, and distinguish between the different concepts that have been covered in the course.

Final Project (25%)

The final project will have a written and an oral component and will be done in groups. The goal of the project is twofold: first that students can deepen their understanding in one area which we did not have enough time to cover and second, that students start thinking about the process of setting up a valid scientific question and **design their own experiment**. Students will be asked to read articles from academic journals and then to propose their own research project and hypotheses. Ideally, students will come up with a novel question that they would like to know the answer to. Then, students must develop a research hypothesis and **propose and experiment** to test their hypotheses.

Your written project will have 3 main parts: literature review, research proposal and hypotheses, and conclusion. The literature review will consist of at least three readings selected by the group members and must be from academic journals. These will be the foundation of your report which will shape the research question you are asking. The experimental research proposal is where your scientific creativity will be evaluated. In this section you should come up with an interesting question that has not been addressed in your readings and you should state a research hypothesis based on the previous knowledge. You will also propose an experimental way of testing your hypothesis. The written part is due in the first meeting of the last week.

The oral presentation should be no more than 25 minutes. Clarity, cohesion, and communication skills will be assessed. Your goal is to inform your peers of your project in a way that they will understand and remember without reading the same material you read. Assistance is compulsory during the last week. Failing to be present for your and others' presentation will result in a severe 50% deduction of your participation grade.

Methodology

The course will have the following components:

1. Lectures: these will be lead by the instructor with space for questions.
2. Discussions: some sessions will have a roundtable format. Everyone is expected to contribute.
3. Film analysis: we will analyze two films and discuss them critically in class.
3. Presentations: the last week of classes students will present their final project.
4. In-class experiments: often times I will conduct in class a pen&paper experiment or survey to introduce a topic.

Weekly Schedule of Activities

Week 1: Introduction and Initial Reflections

Meeting 1

Introductions and overview of the course. Initial reflection exercise on fairness. *How would a perfectly fair world and society look?*

Discussion material:

- United Nations Millennium Development goals Report. United Nations.
- 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development goals. [Link](#).

Week 2: Different Notions of fairness. Is equal the same as fair?

Meeting 1

We ask: what is fairness? In this meeting we will look several concepts that are used as synonymous in daily conversations, but actually have different meanings.

Learning material:

- Cook, K. S., & Hegtvedt, K. A. (1983). Distributive justice, equity, and equality. Annual review of sociology, 9(1), 217-241.[Link](#).

Meeting 2

The simplest settings that social scientists have devised to study notions of fairness are the famous *dictator and ultimatum games*. They been implemented as experiments hundreds, if not thousands, of times across the world and we will often find many variations of them throughout the course.

Learning material:

- Camerer, Colin F., and Richard H. Thaler. 1995. "Anomalies: Ultimatums, Dictators and Manners." Journal of Economic Perspectives, 9 (2): 209-219. [Link](#).

Week 3: Psychological Theory of Inequity

Meeting 1

We come back to the dictator and ultimatum games with a twist: the total money to divide is the result of joint effort or investments.

Learning material:

- Cherry, T. L., Frykblom, P., & Shogren, J. F. (2002). Hardnose the dictator. American Economic Review, 92(4), 1218-1221.[Link](#).
- NATO Funding guidelines. Accessed September 2018.[Link](#).
- Donald Trump on Secretary of Defense Matthis: "I know more about NATO than Matthis, I know more about fairness". [Link](#) to video.

Meeting 2

We will cover a classic reading of the Psychology literature from 1963 and will then study applications of the theory in industrial relations.

Learning material:

- Adams, J. S. (1963). Towards an understanding of inequity. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 67(5), 422.
- Folger, R., & Cropanzano, R. (2012). “Chapter 1 Equity and Distributive Justice as Outcome Fairness” in *Organizational justice and human resource management*. Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com>. [Link](#).

Week 4: Fair Outcomes versus Opportunities

Learning material:

- Chapter 5 “Created Equal” from Friedman, M., & Friedman, R. (1990). *Free to choose: A personal statement*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. (Document available in class website).
- Corak, M. (2013). Income inequality, equality of opportunity, and intergenerational mobility. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 27(3), 79-102. [Link](#).
- Mankiw, N. G. (2007). Fair Taxes? Depends What You Mean by ‘Fair’. *New York Times*, 15. [Link](#).
- Producers Ned Parker, Ross Young, Zoe Hines, James Tovell, and Jeremy Turner (Producers). *Means to an End* (in *I am a Killer*) [video file]. (2018). Retrieved from www.netflix.com.

Week 5: Is there are a trade-off between a fairness and efficiency?

- Le Grand, J. (1990). Equity versus efficiency: the elusive trade-off. *Ethics*, 100(3), 554-568. [Link](#).
- Chapter 2. Okun, Arthur M.. *Equality and Efficiency : The Big Tradeoff*, Brookings Institution Press, 2015. [Link](#).

Week 6:

Meeting 1

We will continue with the tradeoff between equity and efficiency.

Learning material:

- Chapters 3,4. Okun, Arthur M.. *Equality and Efficiency : The Big Tradeoff*, Brookings Institution Press, 2015. [Link](#).

Meeting 2

- Short writing assignment is due. See description above.
- Presentations.

Week 7: Framing, context, and communication

We have studied many experiments to understand people’s concerns for fairness. We now turn to ask: what aspects of the interaction between subjects in experiment such as the dictator game affect sharing?

- List, J. A. (2007). On the interpretation of giving in dictator games. *Journal of Political economy*, 115(3), 482-493. [Link](#).
- Andreoni, J., & Rao, J. M. (2011). The power of asking: How communication affects selfishness, empathy, and altruism. *Journal of public economics*, 95(7-8), 513-520. [Link](#).
- Falk, A., Fehr, E., & Fischbacher, U. (2003). On the nature of fair behavior. *Economic inquiry*, 41(1), 20-26. [Link](#).

Week 8: Accountability and Fairness

What happens when people, organizations, or nations are not held accountable for their actions? Can accountability help restore fairness?

Learning material:

- *Flight*. Produced by Robert Zemeckis. (2012). Paramount Pictures. (We will watch this movie at an alternative time, and will discuss it in class.)
- Folger, R., & Cropanzano, R. (2001). Fairness theory: Justice as accountability. *Advances in organizational justice*, 1, 1-55. [Link](#).

Week 9: Exam week

Meeting 1

We will do a review of concepts as preparation for the exam.

Meeting 2

Exam.

Week 10: Self-Serving Bias

Do people have a stable sense of fairness or does their judgment change depending on their position in a social exchange?

Learning material

- Babcock, L., & Loewenstein, G. (1997). Explaining bargaining impasse: The role of self-serving biases. *Journal of Economic perspectives*, 11(1), 109-126.
- Dana, J., Weber, R. A., & Kuang, J. X. (2007). Exploiting moral wiggle room: experiments demonstrating an illusory preference for fairness. *Economic Theory*, 33(1), 67-80.

Week 11: How we learn about fairness. Social experiments with children.

Are we born with a sense of fairness or does it develop as we learn to socialize?

Learning material.

- Carson, A. S., & Banuazizi, A. (2008). "That's not fair": Similarities and differences in distributive justice reasoning between American and Filipino children. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 39(4), 493-514. [Link](#).
- Almås, I., Cappelen, A. W., Sørensen, E. O., & Tungodden, B. (2010). Fairness and the development of inequality acceptance. *Science*, 328(5982), 1176-1178. [Link](#).

Week 12: Gender differences

Are men and women equally fair?

Learning Material

- Bolton, G. E., & Katok, E. (1995). An experimental test for gender differences in beneficent behavior. *Economics Letters*, 48(3-4), 287-292. [Link](#).
- Andreoni, J., & Vesterlund, L. (2001). Which is the fair sex? Gender differences in altruism. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 116(1), 293-312. [Link](#).
- Dufwenberg, M., & Muren, A. (2006). Gender composition in teams. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 61(1), 50-54. [Link](#).

Week 13: Fairness in other species

Learning Material:

- Youtube Video of Frans de Waal on capuchin monkeys. [Link](#).
- Brosnan, S. F., & de Waal, F. B. (2003). Monkeys reject unequal pay. *Nature*, 425(6955), 297. [Link](#).
- Brosnan, S. F., & de Waal, F. B. (2012). Fairness in animals: Where to from here?. *Social Justice Research*, 25(3), 336-351. [Link](#).

Week 14: Final Projects and Presentations

Academic Integrity

NYU Abu Dhabi expects its students to adhere to the highest possible standards of scholarship and academic conduct. Students should be aware that engaging in behaviors that violate the standards of academic integrity will be subject to review and may face the imposition of penalties in accordance with the procedures set out in the NYUAD policy. Further details at: <https://students.nyuad.nyu.edu/campus-life/community-standards/policies/academic-integrity/>.

Academic Accommodations

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (mosescsd@nyu.edu) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance. Further details at: www.nyu.edu/csd.

Writing Center Resources:

Located in the NYUAD Library, the Writing Center offers one-on-one consultations designed to aid and develop student projects at any stage of the process — from brainstorming to fine-tuning, from developing a motive and a thesis to integrating sources ethically. Writing consultants are experienced readers and writers who help students develop specific skills necessary for drafting and revising and facilitate critical and reflective thinking on a student's own writing process, oral expression, or ELL-related aspects of student expression. The Center welcomes students from any field or discipline (including the Core Curriculum). Students can make appointments as walk-ins or via the Writing Center website: <https://nyuad.mywconline.com/>.