



SPED1020

Why People Believe Weird Things: Making Rational Decisions in an Irrational World

Session 2, Special circumstance 2020

Macquarie School of Education

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Disclaimer

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Notice

As part of [Phase 3 of our return to campus plan](#), most units will now run tutorials, seminars and other small group learning activities on campus for the second half-year, while keeping an online version available for those students unable to return or those who choose to continue their studies online.

To check the availability of face-to-face and online activities for your unit, please go to [timetable viewer](#). To check detailed information on unit assessments visit your unit's iLearn space or consult your unit convenor.

General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Unit Convenor

John Ehrich

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Contact via email

Building X5B 239

Monday - Friday 9am - 5 pm

Tutor

Andrew Wowk

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Monday - Tuesday 9am - 5 pm

Tutor

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Credit points

10

Prerequisites

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

This unit provides an introduction to why people make irrational decisions and how an understanding of the scientific process can assist making rational decisions in everyday life.

The unit will include examination of flaws in human perception and cognitive biases, characteristics of pseudoscience as well as features and limitations of scientific approaches.

Principles discussed in the unit will be illustrated with practical examples including paranormal claims, questionable educational interventions and dubious health claims. You will be equipped with tools to evaluate evidence, strengthen your reasoning and improve your decision making in both academic study as well as everyday life.

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates>

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

ULO1: describe and critically evaluate the basic features and limitations of a scientific approach to evaluating evidence and claims

ULO2: identify typical indicators of pseudo-science in evaluating evidence and claims

ULO3: critically evaluate at a basic level a range of claims and evidence from a range of academic and non-academic sources

ULO4: explain common factors that contribute to errors in human judgement when evaluating claims

General Assessment Information

Assessment Presentation and Submission Guidelines Please follow these guidelines when you submit each assignment:

- Allow a left and right-hand margin of at least 2cm in all assignments.
- Please type all assignments using 12-point font and 1.5 spacing.
- All assessments must be submitted through Turnitin in .doc or .pdf format
- It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that all assessments are successfully submitted through Turnitin.
- Faculty assignment cover sheets are NOT required. Draft Submissions & Turnitin Originality Reports
- Students may use Turnitin's Originality Report as a learning tool to improve their academic writing if this option is made available in the unit.
- Students are strongly encouraged to upload a draft copy of each assessment to Turnitin at least one week prior to the due date to obtain an Originality Report.
- The Originality Report provides students with a similarity index that may indicate if plagiarism has occurred. Students will be able to make amendments to their drafts prior to their final submission on the due date.
- Generally, one Originality Report is generated every 24 hours up to the due date. Please note:
- Students should regularly save a copy of all assignments before submission,
- Students are responsible for checking that their submission has been successful and has been submitted by the due date and time.

Assignment extensions and late penalties

- In general, there should be no need for extensions except through illness or misadventure that would be categorised as serious and unavoidable disruption according to the University definition of same, see: <https://students.mq.edu.au/study/my-study-program/special-consideration>
- Applications for extensions must be made via AskMQ according to the Special 3 Consideration policy. Extensions can only be granted if they meet the Special Considerations policy and are submitted via <https://ask.mq.edu.au/>. This will ensure consistency in the consideration of such requests is maintained.
- Late submissions: Unless a Special Consideration request has been submitted and approved, (a) a penalty for lateness will apply – two (2) marks out of 100 will be deducted per day for assignments submitted after the due date – and (b) no assignment will be accepted more than seven (7) days (incl. weekends) after the original submission deadline. No late submissions will be accepted for timed assessments – e.g. quizzes, online tests. Late penalties are applied by unit convenors or their delegates after tasks are assessed.
- If a student is still permitted to submit on the basis of unavoidable disruption, an alternative topic may be set.
- Students should keep an electronic file of all assessments. Claims regarding "lost" assessments cannot be made if the file cannot be produced. It is also advisable to keep an electronic file of all drafts and the final submission on a USB untouched/unopened after submission. This can be used to demonstrate easily that the assessment has not been amended after the submission date. Requesting a re-assessment of an assignment If you have evidence that your task has been incorrectly assessed against the grade descriptors you can request a re-mark. To request a re-mark you need to contact the unit convenor within 7 days of the date of return of the assignment and provide a detailed assessment of your script against the task criteria. Evidence from your assignment must be provided to support your judgements.

Note: Failed assessments cannot be re-marked as they are all double-marked as a part of the moderation process.

Please note: The outcome of a re-mark may be a higher/lower or unchanged grade. Grades are standards referenced and effort is NOT a criterion.

Quiz Assessments

Online quizzes are an individual assessment task and **MUST BE COMPLETED** by each student individually. Similarities in responses between students will be checked and investigated for possible collusion. Please see the Academic Honesty Handbook for more information.

University policy on grading

Criteria for awarding grades for assessment tasks

Assignments will be awarded grades ranging from HD to F according to guidelines set out in the

University's Grading Policy. The following descriptive criteria are included for your information.

Descriptive Criteria for awarding grades in the unit

In order to meet the unit outcomes and successfully pass this unit, students must make a genuine attempt at all assessment tasks. Where any submitted assessment task is considered to be unsatisfactory in this regard, the highest possible final grade that can be awarded for the unit will be 45.

Students will be awarded grades ranging from HD to F according to guidelines set out in the policy: <https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policies/assessment-in-effect-from-session-2-2016>

The following generic grade descriptors provide university-wide standards for awarding final grades.

Grade	Descriptor
HD (High Distinction)	Provides consistent evidence of deep and critical understanding in relation to the learning outcomes. There is substantial originality and insight in identifying, generating and communicating competing arguments, perspectives or problem solving approaches; critical evaluation of problems, their solutions and their implications; creativity in application as appropriate to the discipline.
D (Distinction)	Provides evidence of integration and evaluation of critical ideas, principles and theories, distinctive insight and ability in applying relevant skills and concepts in relation to learning outcomes. There is demonstration of frequent originality in defining and analysing issues or problems and providing solutions; and the use of means of communication appropriate to the discipline and the audience.
Cr (Credit)	Provides evidence of learning that goes beyond replication of content knowledge or skills relevant to the learning outcomes. There is demonstration of substantial understanding of fundamental concepts in the field of study and the ability to apply these concepts in a variety of contexts; convincing argumentation with appropriate coherent justification; communication of ideas fluently and clearly in terms of the conventions of the discipline.
P (Pass).	Provides sufficient evidence of the achievement of learning outcomes. There is demonstration of understanding and application of fundamental concepts of the field of study; routine argumentation with acceptable justification; communication of information and ideas adequately in terms of the conventions of the discipline. The learning attainment is considered satisfactory or adequate or competent or capable in relation to the specified outcomes
F (Fail)	Does not provide evidence of attainment of learning outcomes. There is missing or partial or superficial or faulty understanding and application of the fundamental concepts in the field of study; missing, undeveloped, inappropriate or confusing argumentation; incomplete, confusing or lacking communication of ideas in ways that give little attention to the conventions of the discipline.

Note: If you fail a unit with a professional experience component the fail grade will be on your transcript irrespective of the timing of the placement.

Withdrawing from this UG Unit

If you are considering withdrawing from this unit, please seek academic advice via <https://ask.mq.edu.au> before doing so as this unit may be a co-requisite or prerequisite for units in the

following sessions and may impact on your progression through the degree.

Results

Results shown in iLearn, or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in [eStudent](#). For more information visit [ask.mq.edu.au](#).

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Hurdle	Due
Final Exam	40%	No	Examination period
Assignment	35%	No	Week 7
Weekly topic quiz	25%	No	Weekly

Final Exam

Assessment Type ¹: Examination

Indicative Time on Task ²: 52 hours

Due: **Examination period**

Weighting: **40%**

A two-hour examination, held during the University examination period, is comprised of short answer questions. It covers material from all readings, lectures and tutorials.

On successful completion you will be able to:

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- identify typical indicators of pseudo-science in evaluating evidence and claims
- critically evaluate at a basic level a range of claims and evidence from a range of academic and non-academic sources
- explain common factors that contribute to errors in human judgement when evaluating claims

Assignment

Assessment Type ¹: Problem set

Indicative Time on Task ²: 30 hours

Due: **Week 7**

Weighting: **35%**

The assignment consists of two parts. The first part involves a conceptual question related to

content considered in the first four weeks of the unit. The second part involves the analysis of a scenario for possible signs of pseudoscience and/or features of a scientific approach.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- identify typical indicators of pseudo-science in evaluating evidence and claims
- critically evaluate at a basic level a range of claims and evidence from a range of academic and non-academic sources
- explain common factors that contribute to errors in human judgement when evaluating claims

Weekly topic quiz

Assessment Type ¹: Quiz/Test

Indicative Time on Task ²: 9 hours

Due: **Weekly**

Weighting: **25%**

A total of 9 weekly online multiple choice topic quizzes, each of 5 minutes duration, will be conducted in ilearn. The best 7 scores in these quizzes will count toward the final mark for this component of the assessment.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- describe and critically evaluate the basic features and limitations of a scientific approach to evaluating evidence and claims
- identify typical indicators of pseudo-science in evaluating evidence and claims
- critically evaluate at a basic level a range of claims and evidence from a range of academic and non-academic sources
- explain common factors that contribute to errors in human judgement when evaluating claims

¹ If you need help with your assignment, please contact:

- the academic teaching staff in your unit for guidance in understanding or completing this type of assessment
- the [Writing Centre](#) for academic skills support.

² Indicative time-on-task is an estimate of the time required for completion of the assessment task and is subject to individual variation

Delivery and Resources

There is no required text for this unit. All readings can be accessed via iLean through Leganto.

Information about the unit iLearn site

This unit has a full web presence through iLearn.

Students will need regular access to a computer and the Internet to complete this unit.

Weekly access to iLearn is compulsory for all students. Important assessment information will be posted here, as will other relevant unit notices and materials, including a reading template and guide to lecture note taking to assist your studies.

Various activities and materials for discussion and critical reflection are included and external students especially are encouraged to use this web component. Electronic links and suggested references will be included in the Resources section. Please check the iLearn unit regularly.

Lectures

Weekly lectures are available on the web through the ECHO360 lecture component. You must listen to all lectures.

PowerPoint slides are available in iLearn in advance of the weekly lecture and/or are available in the Active Learning Tool.

Access and technical assistance

Information for students about access to the online component of this unit is available at ilearn.mq.edu.au/login/MQ/. You will need to enter your student username and password.

Please do NOT contact the Unit Convenor regarding iLearn technical help.

No extensions will be given for any technical issues. Allow enough time for your submissions.

Assistance is available from IT Helpdesk ph: 1800 67 4357, or log a request at help.mq.edu.au. OneHelp is the online IT support service for both students and staff.

This unit requires students to use several ICT and software skills:

- Internet access: The iLearn site contains materials for this unit; it is also required for the online submission of all Assessment Tasks, and for the use of Turnitin submission for ALL tasks.
- Word processing, visual representations, and document formatting: You are required to use an appropriate form of software to present your assignments.
- Uploading of assessment tasks to iLearn.

Other useful information about how the teaching is structured. Suggested wording below. Please amend for your unit.

Structure

The unit comprises of a weekly one-hour lecture and a two-hour tutorial. In the tutorial students will discuss issues and questions arising from the lectures and prescribed readings. They are

expected to base their arguments/discussions on evidence from published research and other relevant material. Attendance at all tutorials is expected. Attendance at on campus days for external students is also expected. There will be a supporting website for the unit providing additional readings, links and materials. Lectures will also be available through Echo in iLearn from the following website link: <http://ilearn.mq.edu.au>

Students are required to participate in small group activities, whole class discussion, to read the weekly material in advance, and to complete brief tasks either as individuals or in pairs. The weekly program for the course with the accompanying readings/ preparation is available on the following pages or on the unit ILearn site.

Unit Schedule

Wk	Week Start	Lecture	Tutorial Topic	Quiz	Reading
1	27 July	Introduction	What Do You Believe?	No	1. Hoggart, S., & Hutchinson, M. (1995). Bizarre beliefs. Cohen Books: London, UK. Chapter 1, Introduction., pp. 9 – 17. 2. SPED102 Unit Guide
2	3 Aug	Cognitive Biases 1	The Fallacy of Personal Validation	Yes	French, C. C., & Wilson, K. (2007). Cognitive factors underlying paranormal beliefs and experiences. In S. Della Sala (ed.). Tall tales about the mind and brain: Separating fact from fiction. Oxford University Press: Oxford. pp. 3-22.
3	10 Aug	Cognitive Biases 2	Thanks for the Memories!	Yes	Loftus, E. F. (2005). Planting misinformation in the human mind: A 30-year investigation of the malleability of memory. Learning and Memory, 12, 361-366.
4	17 Aug	Science vs Pseudoscience	Astrology – Science or Pseudoscience?	Yes	Hines, T. (2003). Pseudoscience and the paranormal. Prometheus Books: Amherst, NY. The nature of pseudoscience, Chapter 1, pp.13-41.
5	24 Aug	Pathological Science	Lets Make an Ology!	Yes	Huizenga, J. R. (1993). Cold fusion : The scientific fiasco of the century. Oxford University Press: Oxford. Chapter 12, Pathological science, pp. 201 – 214.
6	31 Aug	Research methods – Good vs Bad Science	Research Methods	Yes	Jackson, S. L. (2006) Research methods and statistics. Thomson Wadsworth. Chapter 1, pp. 11-25.
7	7 Sep	Use and Misuse of Statistics	Preparation of Bad Science Proposals	Yes	Goldacre, B. (2008). Bad science. McClelland & Stewart: London. Chapter 14, Bad stats, pp. 256-277.
	14 Sep	Assignment 1 due			
	Recess				

	21 Sep Recess				
8	30 Sep	No lecture	No tutorial	No	No reading
9	7 Oct	Education Related Pseudoscience	Presentation of Bad Science Proposals	Yes	Carter, M. & Wheldall, K. (2008). Why can't a teacher be more like a scientist? Science, pseudoscience and the art of teaching. Australasian Journal of Special Education, 32, 5-21.
10	14 Oct	Health Related Pseudoscience	Alternative Medicines	Yes	Hall, H. (2013). Down the garden path: Faulty thinking and self-delusion. Skeptical Inquirer, 37 (4), 32-35.
11	21 Oct	Paranormal – The Truth is Out There	Psychics Exposed – Cold Reading Workshop	Yes	1. Hyman, R. (2003). How not to test mediums: critiquing the Afterlife Experiments, Skeptical Inquirer, 27 (1), 20-30. 2. Nickell, J. (2001) John Edward: Hustling the bereaved: Skeptical Inquirer, 25(6), 19-23.
12	28 Oct	Putting it all together – the take home message	Revision	No	No reading. Personal study time.
13	4 Nov	No Lecture	Revision	No	No reading. Personal study time.

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central \(https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central\)](https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

- [Academic Appeals Policy](#)
- [Academic Integrity Policy](#)
- [Academic Progression Policy](#)
- [Assessment Policy](#)
- [Fitness to Practice Procedure](#)
- [Grade Appeal Policy](#)
- [Complaint Management Procedure for Students and Members of the Public](#)
- [Special Consideration Policy](#) (**Note:** The Special Consideration Policy is effective from 4 December 2017 and replaces the Disruption to Studies Policy.)

Students seeking more policy resources can visit the [Student Policy Gateway \(https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/student-policy-gateway\)](https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/student-policy-gateway). It is your one-stop-shop for the key policies you need to know about throughout your undergraduate student journey.

If you would like to see all the policies relevant to Learning and Teaching visit [Policy Central \(https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/p\)](https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/p)

[olicy-central](#)).

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: <https://students.mq.edu.au/study/getting-started/student-conduct>

Results

Results published on platform other than [eStudent](#), (eg. iLearn, Coursera etc.) or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in [eStudent](#). For more information visit ask.mq.edu.au or if you are a Global MBA student contact globalmba.support@mq.edu.au

In addition, the following policies and procedures of the Department of Educational Studies are applicable in this unit.

Attendance for undergraduate units

All Internal tutorials begin in Week 1 of Session 2.

Activities completed during weekly tutorials (internal) or on campus days (external) are essential for building the core knowledge and/or skills required to demonstrate the learning outcomes of this unit [and to meet the AITSL Graduate Teacher Standards and/or ACECQA requirements]. Attendance at all tutorials or on campus days is expected and the roll will be taken.

Students are required to attend the tutorial in which they are enrolled. Any changes to tutorial enrolments must be completed officially through e-student. Please do not contact the unit convenor requesting a change.

Unit Expectations

- Students are expected to read weekly readings before completing tasks and attending tutorials
- Students are expected to listen/attend weekly lectures before completing tasks and attending tutorials

Note: It is not the responsibility of unit staff to contact students who have failed to submit assignments. If you have any missing items of assessment, it is your responsibility to make contact with the unit convenor.

Electronic Communication

It is the student's responsibility to check all electronic communication on a regular weekly basis. Communication may occur via:

- Official MQ Student Email Address
- The Dialogue function on iLearn
- Other iLearn communication functions

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

Learning Skills

Learning Skills (mq.edu.au/learningskills) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to help you improve your marks and take control of your study.

- [Getting help with your assignment](#)
- [Workshops](#)
- [StudyWise](#)
- [Academic Integrity Module](#)

The Library provides online and face to face support to help you find and use relevant information resources.

- [Subject and Research Guides](#)
- [Ask a Librarian](#)

Student Services and Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the [Disability Service](#) who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

Student Enquiries

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at ask.mq.edu.au

If you are a Global MBA student contact globalmba.support@mq.edu.au

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use of IT Resources Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.