**FISH 507/SOE 592 – Introduction to Structured Decision Making**

**Credits:** FISH 507 (UW students) – 3 credits, SOE 592 (WSU students) – 2 credits

**Winter 2023**

1. **Description**

Managing natural resources requires making decisions; in fact, one of the hardest parts of management is deciding what to do to improve conditions for natural resources and the people who rely on them. Decision science is a broad field of inquiry that focuses on both how people make decisions in practice (descriptive decision science) and how people can make decisions more effectively (normative decision science). The application of decision science, known as decision analysis or structured decision making (SDM), offers both a philosophy regarding how to think through decisions and a vast set of tools for framing, structuring, solving, implementing, and revisiting decisions. Increasingly, SDM is a vital part of natural resource management, with agencies using SDM to guide a wide variety of decisions at a range of spatiotemporal scales. This course will provide students with an understanding of the fundamentals of SDM, and will take a deeper dive into a variety of topics, including predictive modeling, multiple objective tradeoffs, risk, value of information, and dynamic or adaptive decisions.

1. **Learning Objectives**

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Understand the major steps in the decision-making process – captured in the acronym PrOACT – and be able to develop a basic framing of natural resource decisions using these steps.
2. Understand the use of a variety of critical tools in decision making, including predictive modeling, multiple objective tradeoffs, risk, value of information, and dynamic or adaptive decisions.
3. Apply decision analysis in the context of their own research to help them think more clearly about the ways in which their research can inform decisions.
4. **Course Instructor**

Sarah Converse

School of Environmental and Forest Sciences & School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences

220B Fishery Sciences, University of Washington

206-221-5791

[sconver@uw.edu](mailto:sconver@uw.edu)

1. **Meeting Times, Location, and Office Hours**

* Workshop: January 3-7, 8:00 – 17:00, Troy 309, WSU Campus, Pullman
* Wednesdays, January 11-March 8, 1-2:20 on <https://washington.zoom.us/j/91090803347> (OR ALTERNATE TIME BY MUTUAL AGREEMENT OF PARTICIPANTS)
* Sarah’s office hours: by appointment (please email so we can schedule a time to meet)

1. **Textbook and Readings**

* I will assign readings weekly. Please consult the GitHub site.

1. **Technology**

I will provide all course materials on GitHub, which can be accessed by students at both campuses. The course website is: <https://github.com/conversesj/UW-WSU_Introduction_to_Structured_Decision_Making>.

For our workshop week in Pullman, be sure to bring a laptop with you. You should have both Excel and R installed.

1. **Teaching Methodology**

***In-class Lecture:*** Course meetings, both during the 1-week workshop and subsequent meetings, will consist of a mix of lectures, discussion, and exercises. I will provide lots of time for in-class discussion and group work, particularly during the 1-week workshop. I encourage course participants to work together both inside and outside class to discuss the material and work on homework or projects collaboratively.

***Homework:*** I will develop 4 homework problem sets for you to complete over the course of the quarter. These will be designed to help you practice what we have discussed in class. I will drop the homework with the lowest grade before calculating your final course grade.

***Final Project:*** Each course participant will develop a decision framework relevant to their research setting. This will require thinking through a decision framework that is likely to be relevant to a decision maker in your research context. In addition to writing a short report describing the framework, you will give a short presentation in class. I will provide more details as the course proceeds.

**8. Coursework and Grades**

Course Participation 35%

Homework 35%

Final Project 30%

TOTAL 100%

At UW, **final grades**will be converted from a percentage to a grade based on the chart below.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 100-98% | 97-96% | 95-94% | 93-92% | 91% | 90-89% | 88-87% | 86% | 85% |
| 4.0 | 3.9 | 3.8 | 3.7 | 3.6 | 3.5 | 3.4 | 3.3 | 3.2 |
| 84% | 83% | 82% | 81% | 80% | 79% | 78% | 77% | 76% |
| 3.1 | 3.0 | 2.9 | 2.8 | 2.7 | 2.6 | 2.5 | 2.4 | 2.3 |
| 75% | 74% | 73% | 72% | 71% | 70% | 69-0% |  |  |
| 2.2 | 2.1 | 2.0 | 1.9 | 1.8 | 1.7 | 0.0 |  |  |

**9. Inclusivity**

The University of Washington supports an inclusive learning environment where diverse perspectives are recognized, respected, and seen as a source of strength. In this course, we will strive to create welcoming spaces where everyone feels included and engaged regardless of their social and cultural backgrounds.

**10. Policy on Missed Work and Excused Absences**

Completing homeworks and the final project on time is required. Your lowest homework score will be dropped, which you can fall back on if you have to miss a due date. You are expected to attend weekly course meetings in addition to the 1-week workshop, but 1 absence from weekly meetings will not influence your participation grade. However, you should notify me of anticipated absences as early as possible.

**11. Accommodations**

**Disability Accommodations**

It is the policy and practice of the University of Washington to create accessible learning environments consistent with federal and state law, including establishing reasonable accommodations for all students. If you have already established accommodations with Disability Resources for Students (DRS), please activate your accommodations via myDRS so that we can discuss how they will be implemented in this course.

If you have not yet established services through DRS, and you have a temporary health condition or permanent disability that requires accommodations, contact DRS directly ([disability.uw.edu](http://depts.washington.edu/uwdrs/)) to set up an Access Plan. DRS facilitates the interactive process that establishes reasonable accommodations. Conditions requiring accommodation include but are not limited to mental health, attention-related, learning, vision, hearing, physical or health impacts.

In assessing whether you require reasonable accommodations through DRS, please note that full participation in this course requires the following types of engagement:

1. The ability to attend 2 2-hour lecture and hands-on sessions each week.
2. The ability to complete online quizzes.
3. The ability to complete take-home exams.

**Religious Accommodations**

Washington state law requires that UW develop a policy for accommodation of student absences or significant hardship due to reasons of faith or conscience, or for organized religious activities. The UW’s policy, including more information about how to request an accommodation, is available at [Religious Accommodations Policy](https://registrar.washington.edu/staffandfaculty/religious-accommodations-policy/). Accommodations must be requested within the first two weeks of this course using the [Religious Accommodations Request form](https://registrar.washington.edu/students/religious-accommodations-request/)

**12. Academic Integrity**

We expect graduate students to adopt the strict academic integrity standards of professional scientists as well as to adhere to the University Student Conduct Code. This requires that your work reflects your own intellectual efforts. Presenting someone else’s work as your own represents academic misconduct, as does assisting someone else in committing academic misconduct. The Student Conduct Code defines prohibited conduct and describes how the University holds students accountable (WAC 478-121). All suspected cases of academic misconduct will be handled according to University regulations.

In this course, it is critical that you:

1. Cite any literature that informs your responses on your homeworks or project. I reserve the right to deduct some or all points if sources are not cited.
2. Work collaboratively, but pull your own weight in collaborative work.

**14. Safety**

Call SafeCampus at 206-685-7233 anytime – no matter where you work or study – to anonymously discuss safety and well-being concerns for yourself or others. SafeCampus’s team of caring professionals will provide individualized support, while discussing short- and long-term solutions and connecting you with additional resources when requested.

**15. Schedule**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Week** | **Day** | **Date** | **Topic** |
| 1 | Tu-Sa | Jan 3-7 | *See detailed workshop schedule* |
| 2 | W | Jan 11 | In depth: Predictive modeling |
| 3 | W | Jan 18 | In depth: Multiple objectives |
| 4 | W | Jan 25 | a*No Class or* In depth: Risk |
| 5 | W | Feb 1 | a*No Class or* In depth: Risk |
| 6 | W | Feb 8 | In depth: Knowledge gaps |
| 7 | W | Feb 15 | In depth: Dynamic and adaptive management |
| 8 | W | Feb 22 | *No Class* |
| 9 | W | Mar 1 | Final project presentations (if needed) |
| 10 | W | Mar 8 | Final project presentations |

aNote: we will not have class on either 1/25 or 2/1, TBD.

**Detailed Workshop Schedule (subject to change and refinement)**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Day** | **Time** | **Topic** |
| T, Jan 3 | a.m. | Introduction to SDM, PrOACT, Problem Framing |
| T, Jan 3 | p.m. | Objectives, exercise and discussion |
| W, Jan 4 | a.m. | Alternatives, exercise and discussion |
| W, Jan 4 | p.m. | Consequences, exercise and discussion |
| Th, Jan 5 | a.m. | Decision Types, Tradeoffs |
| Th, Jan 5 | p.m. | Exercise and discussion |
| Fr, Jan 6 | all day | Exercise and discussion |
| Sat, Jan 7 | a.m. | Workshop closeout, next steps |