

Empirical Studies in Ethical Decision-Making

– Multi-method approaches

Course instructors

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Location

Campus Munich, TUM School of Management, Online

Application and registration procedure

Goal and target audience

The course is aimed at doctoral candidates and advanced Master's students from all management disciplines including Leadership and Organizational Behavior, Human Resource Management, Corporate Social Responsibility, Marketing and Advertising, Supply Chain Management, Financial Management and Accounting, Strategic Management.

Application/Registration process

Write to Gari Walkowitz no later than May 31, 2025 to sign up (gari.walkowitz@tum.de). Please state your primary research area and main methodological approach. Mention also what motivates you to sign up for this course, and whether you plan to run an empirical study with an ethical reference. If you have an ethics-related research question or idea for a study design that you would like to see as an assignment, include a brief proposal in your application. If you have any introductory readings, feel free to suggest these, too. Please make sure you can attend the full course before signing up. From a pedagogical perspective and out of fairness toward the other participants, you should not miss any part of the course for any reason.

Course Overview

Behavioral ethics and ethical reflection are crucial across all management disciplines because they help leaders recognize and navigate the complex psychological, social, and organizational factors that influence ethical decision-making. By understanding cognitive biases, social pressures, and organizational cultures, managers can make more informed, fair, and responsible decisions. Various empirical research approaches are used to study and better understand the decision-making behavior of corporate decision-makers. In this course, we will take an in-depth look at the various empirical methods against the participants' own research background.

Course aims

What this course is

- A hands-on, research-focused course aimed at exploring ethical decision-making from a transdisciplinary perspective.
- A platform for students to develop their own empirical studies that address ethically relevant research questions in their specific academic (sub)domains.
- An exploration of the use of various empirical methodologies, such as incentivized laboratory experiments, vignette studies, surveys, and questionnaires, to study ethical decision-making.
- A course designed to bridge theory and practice, emphasizing how ethical theories can be operationalized in empirical study settings.

What this course is not

- A theoretical or philosophical course solely focused on ethical theory.
- A course focused solely on observational or non-experimental research methods.
- A course providing definitive answers to ethical dilemmas; instead, it promotes the process of inquiry, reflection, and understanding in experimental contexts.
- A course that provides pre-designed experiments—students will design their own experiments based on their specific research interests.

Course objectives

Knowledge Objectives

By the end of the course, students will:

1. Understand key theories and frameworks in behavioral economics, experimental economics, and social psychology as they relate to ethical decision-making.
2. Gain familiarity with ethical decision-making models and how they apply to management and behavioral ethics.
3. Be aware of the ethical limitations and biases in ethical decision-making.
4. Be aware of ethical considerations and challenges when designing behavioral studies involving human subjects.
5. Understand the strengths and weaknesses of various empirical approaches for studying ethical behavior.

Skills Objectives

By the end of the course, students will:

1. Be able to design and implement ethical decision-making studies using multi-method approaches.
2. Develop skills in creating and refining study designs, including the use of laboratory experiments, vignette studies, surveys, and questionnaires.
3. Learn to analyze empirical data using appropriate statistical tools and techniques.
4. Enhance skills in writing and presenting research findings clearly and coherently, with a particular focus on ethical implications.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, students will:

1. Develop a research proposal for an empirical study addressing an ethically relevant issue within their academic field.
2. Have the ability to critically evaluate the validity and reliability of study designs, particularly in the context of ethical decision-making research.
3. Be able to synthesize research from various fields (behavioral economics, experimental economics, social psychology) to inform empirical study designs.
4. Cultivate a deep understanding of how individual and contextual factors shape ethical decision-making processes.

Preliminary schedule

The seminar is scheduled to be conducted in July 2025.

Core readings

1. Bazerman, M. H., & Tenbrunsel, A. E. (2011). *Blind Spots: Why We Fail to Do What's Right and What to Do About It*. Princeton University Press.
2. Kahneman, D., & Tversky, A. (1979). Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision under Risk. *Econometrica*, 47(2), 263-291.
3. Falk, A., & Heckman, J. J. (2009). Lab experiments are a major source of knowledge in the social sciences. *Science*, 326(5952), 535-538.
4. Barter, C., & Renold, E. (1999). The use of vignettes in qualitative research. *Social Research Update*, 25(9), 1-6.
5. Davis, D. D., & Holt, C. A. (2021). *Experimental economics*. Princeton university press.

Course procedures

The seminar is scheduled to be in July 2025.

Assessment

The assessment is based on the class assignments.

Workload

21 hours: attendance time

69 hours: preparation and follow-up

Total workload: 90 hours; Credits: 3 ECTS