NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
ROBERT F. WAGNER GRADUATE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE

URPL-GP2471: Transportation Behavior and Policy
Spring 2015 Syllabus (updated on 1/22/2015)

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Office Hours: Wed, 5:00-6:00pm or by appointment

Monday Lecture
4:55 – 6:35pm
25 West 4th Street, Room C-13

Introduction
This course examines the behavioral foundation for policy design, using urban transportation as
eamples. We introduce multiple frameworks of understanding travel behavior, rational or
irrational, contrasting the perspectives of classic economic theory with behavioral economics and
social psychology, and suggest corresponding policy interventions: a behavior--theory--policy
mapping. Then we present a spectrum of instruments for positively influencing behavior and
improving welfare: from manipulating information and changing perceptions of time and space,
to pricing and framing, to inducing emotions of pride and shame, exploiting peer pressure or
enhancing self-control and motivation, and to nudging and preference shaping. Most importantly
the course challenges students 1) to critique, design, implement and interpret experiments that
nudge travel behavior; and 2) to bring behavioral insights to creative design of transport polices,
programs and plans—making them not only efficient and equitable but also simpler, consistent,
transparent, acceptable, and adaptive to behavioral changes.

Recommended Books
• Daniel Kahneman (2011) Thinking, Fast and Slow
• Richard Thaler and Cass R. Sunstein (2008) Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health,
  Wealth, and Happiness
• Dan Ariely (2008) Predictably Irrational
• Eldar Shafir (2013) The Behavioral Foundations of Public Policy
• Elinor Ostrom (1990) Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for
  Collective Action
• Tom Vanderbilt (2008). Traffic: Why We Drive the Way We Do (and What It Says
  About Us)
**Class Participation in Discussion (25%)**
The course expects significant student contribution. Students should read all listed readings and prepare to participate in class discussion extensively. There are 12 topics/classes and each counts 2% towards your class participation grade. The remaining 1% serves as a bonus. On March 2, March 23, and April 6, one third students will share their idea notes at each class, after class lecture and discussion.

**Idea Notes (25%)**
Students are required to write three idea notes to apply three concepts of behavioral economics to transportation policy-making: perception & bias, social norms, and salience of price. Under each concept, identify one transportation policy or program (national or local) that disregards the complexity of human behavior, and discuss the consequence of such ignorance or neglect. At the end, please offer 2 examples of nudge policies in transportation designed by yourself, based on that concept. Maximum words = 1,000

Idea note #1: Perception & Bias
Idea note #2: Social Norms
Idea note #3: Salience of Price

**Class Project (50%)**
Students should form a team of no more than 3 team members from the beginning of the class to conduct a behavioral experiment in transportation. They should collect, critique, design, and implement such experiments, and take active part in debates, dialogues and presentations in class. The final paper counts 30%, teamwork 10%, and final presentation 10%. Please limit the length to be within 5000 words.

**Homework and Grading**

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<tr>
<th>Homework</th>
<th>Share</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>12 classes * 2% + 1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Idea Notes</td>
<td>3 notes * 8.33%</td>
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<td>Class Project</td>
<td>Final paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<td>Presentation</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>February 2</td>
<td><strong>Traditional Behavior-Policy Framework</strong></td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>February 9</td>
<td><strong>Rethinking Rationality</strong></td>
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<td>February 16</td>
<td><strong>From Behavior to Policy</strong></td>
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<td>February 23</td>
<td>No class</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>March 2</td>
<td><strong>Measuring Happiness/Sadness in Transportation</strong></td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>March 9</td>
<td><strong>Perception &amp; Bias</strong></td>
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<td>March 16</td>
<td><strong>The Nudge of Subway Map</strong></td>
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<td>March 23</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
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<td>March 30</td>
<td><strong>Social Norms</strong></td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>April 6</td>
<td><strong>Car Pride under Plate Lottery/Auction in China</strong></td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>April 13</td>
<td><strong>Salience of Price</strong></td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>April 20</td>
<td><strong>Bad Example of Salience-Parking Regulation I</strong></td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>April 27</td>
<td><strong>Bad Example of Salience-Parking Regulation II</strong></td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>May 4</td>
<td><strong>Property Rights and Travel: Street Parking in NYC</strong></td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>May 11</td>
<td><strong>Class Project Presentation (team work)</strong></td>
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Class 1: Traditional Behavior-Policy Framework in Transportation

- Dean, Thomas B. 2003. “Policy Versus the Market: Transportation’s Battleground,” Transportation Research Record, 1839: 5–22 (available on course website)

Class 2: Rethinking Rationality in Travel Decisions

- Mokhtarian and Salomon 2001, How derived is the demand for travel? Some conceptual and measurement considerations, Transportation Research Part A: 35 (8)

Class 3: From Behavior to Policy

- Jinhua Zhao and Tim Baird (2013) ‘Nudging’ Active Travel: A Framework For Behavioral Interventions Using Mobile Technology (available on course website)
Class 4: Measuring Happiness/Sadness in Transportation

- Abou-Zeid et al 2012 Happiness and travel mode switching: Findings from a Swiss public transportation experiment, Transport Policy 19 (1)

Class 5: Perception & Distortion


Class 6: Case Study: Nudge of Subway Maps

- Guo 2011 Mind the Map! Impact of Transit Maps on Travel Decisions in Public Transit Systems, Transportation Research Part A 45(7)
- The Muller-Lyer Illusion, [http://www.rit.edu/cla/gssp400/muller/muller.html](http://www.rit.edu/cla/gssp400/muller/muller.html)

Class 7: Social Norms

• Tom Vanderbilt (2008). Traffic, Chapter 4 Why Ants Don’t Get into Traffic Jams (and Humans Do)

Class 8: Case Study: Car Pride under Plate Lottery and Auction in China
• Zhao and Zhao (2013) Understanding Car Pride: Psychological Structure and Behavioral Implications (To be added)
• Jinhua Zhao, Tracy Chen and David Block-Schachter (2014) Superficial Fairness of Beijing's Vehicle License Lottery Policy (available on course website)
• Chen X, Zhao J. 2012. Bidding to Drive: Car License Auction Policy in Shanghai and Its Public Acceptance. Transport Policy. 27

Class 9: Salience of Price

Class 10: Case Study: Bad Example of Salience-Parking Regulation I
Class 11: Case Study: Bad Example of Salience-Parking Regulation II

Class 12: Property Rights and Travel: Street Parking in New York City
- Guo, Z. 2013. Home parking convenience, household car usage, and implications to residential parking policies. Transport Policy, 29, 97-106
- Guo, Z and S McDonnell. 2013. Curb parking pricing for local residents: an exploration in New York City based on willingness to pay. Transport Policy, 30, 186-198

Class 13 Class Project Presentation