





**This learning unit is not open to incoming exchange students!**

Teacher(s)	Sibony Anne-Lise ;
Language :	English
Place of the course	Louvain-la-Neuve
Prerequisites	Bachelor in law, political science, economics, psychology, or social sciences.
Main themes	This course aims to acquaint students with a new and vibrant field of legal research at the crossroads of behavioural science, public policy, and law. In particular, its main objectives are (i) to introduce students to key findings of behavioural sciences (for students who are new to the field), (ii) to highlight the relevance of behavioural findings for public policy and law, (iii) to study real-world examples of behaviourally informed public policy from different countries and the European Union, and (iv) to take a critical perspective on the use of behavioural findings in policy-making and law-making.
Learning outcomes	<p><b>At the end of this learning unit, the student is able to :</b></p> <p>At the end of this course, students will be able to explain in a rigorous manner some key results from behavioural science and discuss their relevance to policymaking in a given context. They will be familiar with seminal texts in the literature on “nudges”, including critical ones, and will be able to relate ideas discussed in those texts to real-world examples of behavioural policymaking. They will be familiar with the EU framework for bringing scientific evidence to policymaking and some behavioural studies the EU has commissioned. They will develop a capacity to discuss the processes of behavioural policymaking from their own disciplinary angle (psychology, economics, law, political science, philosophy).</p>
Evaluation methods	<p>Students will be evaluated both for their teamwork and individual progress and reflection. The evaluation of teamwork will be based on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 weekly team assignments relating to the readings handed in during the phase of remote learning</li> <li>• A set of questions for Commission officials</li> <li>• One final presentation at the end of the residential week</li> </ul> <p>Individual evaluation will be based on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A learning journal where the student will reflect on different aspects of their learning journey (guidance will be provided)</li> </ul>
Teaching methods	<p>Each student will be assigned to a multidisciplinary team, typically composed of one student in each discipline (psychology, economics, law, political science and philosophy). There will be seven webinars (2 hours each). The first webinar will kick off the course and offer a general introduction. For the following 5 weeks, students will work in small groups to prepare for the next online class. Each week, the group will meet online before class (in principle, the day before). This means that, for five weeks, students will attend one teamwork session (1,5 hours, with a facilitator) and one online class (2-hour webinar).</p> <p>For each of the five themes, there will be several texts to read and/or videos to watch. In each group, students will allocate texts and videos amongst themselves. Each will report to the group about their reading or video. Questions will be provided to guide reading/watching/listening and reporting to the group. For each theme, the group will appoint a rapporteur, who will be responsible for handing in the group assignment (1 to 2 pages per theme). Students will get feedback before the residential week.</p> <p>During the residential intensive week in January, students will attend classes, meet with EU officials involved in behavioural policymaking, and work in teams on a project.</p>
Content	<p>Main themes</p> <p>This course aims to acquaint students with a new and vibrant field of research at the crossroads of psychology, economics, political science, law, and philosophy. Its main objectives are (i) to introduce students to key findings of behavioural sciences (for students who are new to the field), (ii) to highlight the relevance of behavioural findings for public policy and law, (iii) to study real-world examples of behaviourally informed public policy, and (iv) to take a critical perspective on the use of behavioural findings in policy-making and law-making.</p> <p>Detailed content</p> <p>The online teaching will be organised around five broad themes, providing a basis for hands-on teamwork during the residential intensive week.</p>

	<p><b>Introduction:</b> Behavioural Insights and their relevance to policy and law-making</p> <p><b>Theme 1: Bounded rationality</b> Behavioural science started as a challenge to the heroic view of rationality that neoclassical economics offered. Using experiments, psychologists showed that real people do not think, choose or behave like a <i>homo economicus</i> would, not even close. Theme 1 explores some seminal experiments Kahneman &amp; Tversky ran. It also covers the critique of their 'Heuristics and Biases' programme (Gigerenzer).</p> <p><b>Theme 2: Behavioural public policy tools</b> 'Nudge' was a new word in 2008. Almost 20 years on, it is widely used, and even occasionally overused. The book <i>Nudge</i> (Thaler &amp; Sunstein) did a lot to popularise research in behavioural science and underscore its relevance for policy making. '<i>Nudge units</i>' advising governments sprouted in many countries. We will explore the academic debates on the proper definition of 'nudges' as well as attempts to elaborate neighbouring notions ('budges', 'sludges', 'shoves'). We will discuss the usefulness of these terms and debates for policy-making and try to identify categories that are meaningful for practitioners.</p> <p><b>Theme 3: The legitimacy of behavioural interventions</b> Much of the initial discussion on 'nudges' took place in the US and focused on paternalism. Critics challenged the <i>Nudge</i> project, which aims to help governments apply psychological insights to steer citizens' behaviour more effectively. The fear they expressed is that '<i>nudging</i>' has the potential to violate citizens' autonomy. This raised the question of how behavioural public interventions interact with constitutional safeguards. We will explore the scholarship dealing with philosophical and legal aspects of behavioural policy making and confront it with the European reality.</p> <p><b>Theme 4: Effectiveness of behavioural interventions</b> After the promises of behavioural policy making spread among governments worldwide, some scholars started to question whether behavioural interventions were effective. Several meta-studies sought to measure the effect sizes of behavioural interventions. We will discover the results of these studies and investigate how effectiveness is considered in the EU policy-making process, both in the short and long term.</p> <p><b>Theme 5: Limits of behavioural public interventions</b> Behavioural interventions have gained traction but this does not mean they are a silver bullet. We will investigate limitations of current knowledge and government practice. For example, do humans in real life decide as they do in the lab? What happens when more than one behavioural phenomenon is present (what is the combined effect)? Do certain behavioural interventions help some group but not others? Why does a behavioural behavioural intervention sometimes work and sometimes not? Can behavioural interventions be personalised and is it lawful?</p>
<p>Inline resources</p>	<p>Online resources will be available on UCLouvain <b>Open Moodle</b> platform. The Journal Behavioural Public Policy, which focuses on issues covered in this course is accessible online: <a href="https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/behavioural-public-policy">https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/behavioural-public-policy</a></p>
<p>Bibliography</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eyal Zamir and Doron Teichman, Behavioral Law and Economics (Oxford: OUP, 2018).</li> <li>• Kai Ruggieri (ed.), Psychology and Behavioral Economics: Applications for Public Policy (Routledge, 2nd ed. 2022)</li> <li>• Eldar Shafir (ed), The Behavioral Foundations of Public Policy (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2012)</li> <li>• Alberto Alemanno and Anne-Lise Sibony (eds): Nudge and the Law: A European Perspective (Oxford: Hart, 2015)</li> <li>• Eyal Zamir and Doron Teichman (eds), The Oxford Handbook of Behavioral Economics and the Law (OUP, 2014)</li> <li>• Adam Oliver, A political economy of behavioural public policy (Cambridge University Press, 2023)</li> <li>• Yuval Feldman, The Law of Good People: Challenging States' Ability to Regulate Human Behavior (Cambridge University Press, 2018)</li> </ul>

<p>Other infos</p>	<p><b>Applications</b></p> <p>The first edition of this course will run with 25 students. Candidates are invited to express their interest by filling out <a href="#">this form</a> <b>before September 20th</b> 2025. Candidates will receive a response by September 30th.</p> <p>The selection process will consider motivation and ensure the diversity of the student body in terms of disciplines and universities. Early application is encouraged to secure your spot.</p> <p><b>Prerequisites</b></p> <p>Bachelor in psychology, economics, political science, law, philosophy, or social sciences.</p> <p>For this course, it is essential to have a <b>good command of English</b> (to read, write, participate in group discussion and present your work). The minimum required level is <b>B2</b>.</p> <p><b>Credits</b></p> <p>This teaching module is 5 ECTS. This represents approximately 125 hours of student work, including online and residential activities. The workload is spread as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. October-December <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 22 hours of online activities (7 online classes (2 hours each) + 5 teamwork sessions (1,5 hours). Each week, students will have an online meeting with their group before the online class. Between mid-October and early-December, there will be <b>two online sessions per week</b> on Mondays and Tuesday evenings</li> <li>• 20 hours of autonomous work (reading, watching, reflecting on questions asked, preparing short presentations or written text to report to the group, taking notes for the learning journal).</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. January: residential week <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 20 hours of autonomous work to prepare for the residential week.</li> <li>• 40 hours of teaching, group work, discussions with guests, and presentations</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. After the residential week <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 hours of autonomous work to finalise your learning journal</li> </ul> </li> </ol> <p><b>Residential week</b></p> <p>The residential intensive week will take place at the UCLouvain Brussels Campus (Saint-Louis) from January 26th to January 30th. Students from other universities will receive information about accommodation in Brussels. The cost of accommodation in shared rooms will be covered. Students visiting from abroad should plan to stay in Brussels until January 31st.</p>
<p>Faculty or entity in charge</p>	<p>DRT</p>

<b>Programmes containing this learning unit (UE)</b>				
Program title	Acronym	Credits	Prerequisite	Learning outcomes
Master [120] in Law	<a href="#">DROI2M</a>	5		
Master [120] in Law (shift schedule)	<a href="#">DRHD2M</a>	5		
Master [120] in Law (shift schedule)	<a href="#">DRLN2M</a>	5		