Leaders and private eyes, kings and truckers, you and me - - we all face great problems, and we all need to make great decisions, but researchers find that most decisions are bad decisions. Almost nobody makes good decisions, except in the movies.

What is a Great problem? How can we tell when a decision is Great? What would the best leaders do?

We’ll be decision makers: Truman and the atomic bomb, the firing of Steve Jobs, Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation, the Challenger disaster, decisions in medicine and politics and business and sports and literature and everyday life - - locally, globally, historically, futuristically.

The truest way to understand decision making is by making decisions.

We will define problems, identify alternatives, make rules, and break rules. The course is rooted in the Harvard perspective. We’ll look at decisions as parts of larger patterns. We’ll look at what happens after a decision, as well as what happens before and during decision making.

We’ll make good decisions, and we’ll make bad decisions. When we make a bad decision, what are we going to do about it?

Who killed the evil man on the train? Should the pharmaceutical company release the Abtexol serum? What will they name the new stadium? Was it OK for Lincoln to lie to his friends? What makes a song a “hit”? Who should be the Leader? What’s going on in the famous historical “handshake photos”?

Always, our perspective is: the truest way to learn about decision making is by making decisions.

Class format: directed discussion and presentations. Contributions to class discussion are expected of all students.

Our decisions and actions are going to change the world in 13 weeks.

A variety of writing assignments: several brief responses, some quizzes, a few short essays, a part-take-home mid-term and a part-take-home final.

Here’s our e-text for the course

Timothy Baldwin, William Bommer, & Robert Rubin

The publisher may have the 3rd edition ready, but it will have bugs. We want the 2nd edition because all of the bugs have been worked out in the 2nd Edition.

The ISBN is 978-0-07353040-6 for the paperback, but we want the e-text. E-texts are incredibly inconvenient, but IU negotiated a 75% price cut for the e-text, and our students’ funds are important.

(I will also ask students to view 2 films that the class will help determine.)