

Decision Processes Colloquia

Monday, February 9, 2026

Where: JMHH 360

When: 12:00 – 1:20 pm

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Authentic to Whom? The Interpersonal Dynamics of Authenticity Perceptions

ABSTRACT:

Authenticity has traditionally been understood as an internal pursuit—a matter of acting in accordance with one’s inner or core self. Yet authenticity has increasingly become a social expectation: people now demand authenticity from their organizations, leaders, colleagues, and peers. As a result, understanding how people perceive the authenticity of others is critically important. In this talk, I present two projects that examine both the biases that distort and the strategies that enhance perceived authenticity. In the first, I utilize round-robin ratings among small teams of students (10,104 observations) to show that authenticity judgments are biased by similarity: people perceive others with similar personality profiles as more authentic than those with dissimilar ones. In the second, I identify a simple yet surprising strategy for increasing perceived authenticity: offering rationales for one’s behavior. Across multiple studies, I find that when people explain why they are doing what they are doing, they are perceived as more authentic because they seem more relatable. Together, these findings reveal both the biases that shape authenticity perceptions and the communicative behaviors that make people appear more genuine to others.

