

## Decision-making, rationality and the nature of human morality and social behavior

**Meeting Time:** Monday 1 to 4pm

**Meeting Place:** IBLC Room 157

**Instructor: Joe Henrich**

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**Final Examination Time and Date:** see registrar

### Course Description

Within a broadly evolutionary framework this seminar course will pursue an interdisciplinary inquiry into human decision-making by drawing materials from social and cognitive psychology, behavioral economics and game theory, neuroscience, anthropology, political science, and behavioral genetics. Substantive areas of focus will include (1) rationality, heuristics and biases in decision-making, (2) social preferences and prosocial motivations, (3) inter-temporal choice, (4) risk and uncertainty, (5) religion, (6) culture, institutions and prosocial preferences, (7) adaptive learning and belief formation, (8) in-group, out-group, and ethnicity, and (9) methods for studying decision-making.

### Course Materials and Resources

#### *Online, Vista*

There is a course website on the new Blackboard UBC Vista system. This system is the main vehicle for delivering the readings. Extended discussions may also occur in the chat room. Vista is at <https://www.elearning.ubc.ca/home/index.cfm>. Or log directly on at: <https://www.vista.ubc.ca/webct/logon/226906602011>.

### Course requirements and weightings for final grade:

Your course grade is based four components: your general participation in seminar, which includes attendance, your effectiveness at leading the some discussions, your presentation of one or more background readings, and your final paper.

#### *Participation*

Students are expected to do the reading and avidly participate.

Grading Instrument	% contribution
General Participation	5%
Discussion leading	20%
Paper Review	10%
Final Paper	65%

### *Discussion leading*

Students will be assigned or will volunteer to lead one or two discussions over the length of the course. In each class two people will team up to lead the discussion. They will be responsible for presenting the readings, highlighting key insights or concerns, and energizing the discussion. This two-person team will lead off the class with a 15 minute presentation.

Leaders will meet with me on Friday afternoon (ideally).

### *Expert Background Paper*

For each class there will be one paper that is optional for everyone except one person, who will be the designated expert on that paper. This student will lead off the second half of each class with a review of the highlights from the optional paper (5 to 10 minutes), and discuss how it informs the main readings, the discussion, and the broader questions running through the semester.

### *Final paper:*

Each student must submit a final 15-20 page paper due on December 1, 2009, on a topic of their choice. A topic and outline are due on November 10. Any topic within the general realm of decision-making and human sociality is possible, but the most straightforward approach to select one of the topics covered on a given week, or in a particular reading, and go into depth exploring it.

## Schedule

<p><b>Foundations of Decision Making and Human Behavior</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can we construct a fully integrated understanding of human behavior using the available theoretical and empirical tools from across the human sciences?</li> <li>• What is the best way to model human decision-making?</li> <li>• Are people rational? (and, what if they are not?)</li> <li>• What is the place of culture in decision-making?</li> </ul>		
1	8 September	<p><b>Introduction</b> Review of Syllabus Assignment of discussion leaders for next week. Assignment of optional reading expert Review of paper assignment and grading</p> <p><b>Interdisciplinary approaches to human behavior and decision making</b></p> <p>Reading: Gintis (2007) and Hastie (2001):</p> <p>Discussion leaders Maciek Chudek &amp; Rahul Bhui</p> <p><i>Optional reading:</i> Lowenstein, Rick and Cohen (2008)</p> <p>Expert on optional reading: Will Gervais</p>
2	15 September	<p><b>Are people rational?</b> What are various conceptions of rationality? If we aren't rational, what are we? Can we still build a (parsimonious) theory of decision-making?</p> <p><i>Readings:</i> Shafir and LeBoeuf (2002) Tversky and Kahneman (1992) Brandsatter (2006)</p> <p>Discussion leaders Dave Freeman &amp; Mike Stewart</p> <p><i>Optional Reading</i> List (2004) Expert on optional reading: Donna Feir</p>
3	22 September	<p><b>Intertemporal Choice:</b> How do people tradeoff costs and benefits that are temporarily spaced? Many norms, moral decisions, and altruistic acts</p>

	ber	<p>require deferring benefits to one's future self, so intertemporal choice would seem to part of any approach to morality or altruism.</p> <p><i>Reading:</i> Berns, Laibson, and Loewenstein (2007) Godoy et. al. (2004)</p> <p>Who could explain standard approach to time discounting? Nishant</p> <p>Discussion leaders Carl Falk &amp; Dan Randles</p> <p><i>Optional Reading</i> Laibson (1997) or Fudenberg and Levine (2006)</p> <p><b>Expert on optional reading:</b> Dave Freeman</p>
4	29 September	<p><b>Social learning and the origins of culture:</b> natural selection's solution to decision making in information poor environments.</p> <p><i>Reading:</i> Henrich and Henrich: Chapter 2 Richerson and Boyd (2000)</p> <p>Discussion leaders <b>Joe Henrich</b></p> <p><i>Optional Readings:</i> Culture in non-humans Whiten et al. (1999) Hermann et. al. (2007)</p> <p>Expert on optional reading: Maciek Chudek</p>
5	6 October	<p><b>What is the nature of human sociality?</b> What is unique about it? What do we share with other animals? How did humans become so ultra-social?</p> <p><i>Reading:</i> Henrich and Henrich: Chapters 3 Andreoni and Miller (2002) Choi and Bowles (2007)</p> <p>Discussion leaders Donna Feir &amp; <b>Joey</b></p> <p><b>Guest lecture on altruism distinctions: Steve Stich</b></p>

		<p><i>Optional Reading</i> The Wilson's (2007): group selection</p> <p>Expert on optional reading: Joey Cheng</p>
		<p><b>Nature of Human Sociality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are people selfish? What are the origins of our social preferences or other-regarding motivations?</li> <li>• What are norms and institutions? Where do they come from, and have they influenced human evolution?</li> <li>• Do people internalize intrinsic motivations from the world they live in?</li> <li>• Are norms “wired” into our brains?</li> <li>• Do rewards and punishment damage intrinsic motivation</li> <li>• How are ethnicity groups so important?</li> <li>• Do people have sacred values that violate transitivity?</li> <li>• Is there genetic variation in sociality?</li> </ul>
6	Some time 14 to 17 October	<p><b>On the cultural evolution of prosocial norms:</b> why do we treat strangers fairly and seem willing to cooperate with them?</p> <p><i>Readings:</i> Henrich and Ensminger: Chapters 2 and 4 Fehr and Gächter (2002) Hermann et al. (2008)</p> <p>Discussion leaders Dan Randles &amp; <b>Joe Henrich</b></p> <p><i>Optional Reading</i> Heyman and Ariely (2004)</p> <p>Expert on optional reading: Jasmine Carey</p>
7	20 October	<p><b>Developmental and cross-species studies of human sociality:</b> what can studies of children and non-humans primates tell us about human sociality? We found <i>Homo economicus</i>, he's a chimp.</p> <p><i>Reading:</i> Warneken and Tomasello The Roots of Human Altruism Fehr forthcoming Nature Rakoczy et. al. 2008</p> <p>Discussion leaders: Jason Martens &amp; Jelena</p> <p><i>Optional Readings:</i> Silk (2005)</p>

		<p>Jensen et. al. (2007) Jensen (2006)</p> <p>Expert on optional reading: Damian Murray</p>
8	27 October	<p><b>Norms, endogenous preferences and other-regarding motivation:</b> Challenge: how do these readings relate to what we've discussed previously? Can the usual approach in Economics of assuming preferences are exogenous be justified?</p> <p><b>Discussion Leadership: Jason Martens and Mike Stewart</b></p> <p><i>Readings:</i> Fehr and Camerer (2007) Tabibnia et. al. (2008) <b>Harbaugh et. al (2006)</b></p> <p><i>Optional Reading:</i> Akerlof: The Missing Motivation in Macroeconomics Expert on optional reading: Matias Cortes</p> <p><i>Second Optional Reading</i> Wallace et. al. (2007) Expert on optional reading: Mike Stewart</p>
9	3 November	<p><b>Crowding out of intrinsic motivation and the problem of punishing and rewarding</b></p> <p><i>Reading:</i> Buno Frey (2004) Ariely Bracha and Meir (2007) Bowles (2008)</p> <p>Discussion Leader: Lily Lin &amp; Jasmine Carey</p> <p><i>Optional Reading</i> Ariely et. al. (2006)</p> <p>Expert on optional reading: Rahul Bhui</p>
10	10 November	<p><b>Cognitive foundations of moral judgment</b></p> <p><i>Reading:</i> Mikhail (2007) Sripada and Stich (2006):</p>

		<p><a href="http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~stich/Publications/Papers/Framework_for_the_Psychology_of_Norms_7-23-05.pdf">www.rci.rutgers.edu/~stich/Publications/Papers/Framework_for_the_Psychology_of_Norms_7-23-05.pdf</a></p> <p><b>Guest Lecture: Steve Stich</b></p> <p>Optional reading Knobe (2006)</p> <p>Expert on optional reading: Wanying Zhao</p> <p><b>Paper topics and outlines are DUE</b></p>
11	17 November	<p><b>Moral judgment and decision making:</b> Are certain values special or protected? Do these operate differently from other kinds of values?</p> <p><i>Reading:</i> Bartels and Medin (2007) Tanner et. al. EJSP</p> <p>Discussion Leaders: Wanying Zhao</p> <p><i>Optional Reading</i> Ginges et. al. (2007) Tanner and Medin (2004)</p> <p>Expert on optional reading: Lily Lin</p>
12	24 November This is a “double-week”	<p><b>Why do people care about ethnicity so much? Is it just in-group vs. out-group? Why identity matters.</b></p> <p>Henrich and Henrich: Chapter 9 Kinsler et al. (2007)</p> <p><b>How has religion evolved to influence our sociality? Do supernatural beliefs and ritual matter? Does religion make us prosocial?</b></p> <p>Henrich (2007): IPD</p> <p><i>Discussion Leaders</i> Will Gervais and Damian Murray</p> <p><i>Optional Reading</i> Shariff et. al. (2007) Norenzayan (forthcoming Science)</p> <p>Charge of optional reading: Carl Falk</p>

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