

Ec980PP: Junior Seminar: Understanding Cooperation: Trust, Morality and Religion Across Societies

Fall 2017
Harvard University

Benjamin Enke
Assistant Professor of Economics
enke@fas.harvard.edu

Teaching Fellow:

Enrico Di Gregorio, edigregorio@g.harvard.edu

Hours:

Class: Monday, 3:00-5:00 pm; Science Center room 104

Sections: Tentatively Wednesday, 5:00-6:30 pm

Office hours Ben (schedule on my website): Littauer M-8

- Tuesday, 4:00 – 5:20 pm

Office hours Enrico: Email Enrico for appointments

Course Description:

This interdisciplinary course introduces students to state-of-the-art thinking on cultural variation in cooperation behavior, drawing on insights from economics, cultural psychology and cultural anthropology. We will attempt to answer questions such as: What is the nature of the cross-societal variation in how people collaborate with and trust each other in economic contexts? How can we think of heterogeneity in religious beliefs, moral values, and basic emotions as tools to sustain and enforce cooperation behavior in different cultural “regimes”? What does such a perspective imply for the coevolution of culture with social and economic systems? How does cultural variation in morality help us understand the recent US Presidential Election? In terms of methodological skills, the course will expose students to regression analysis in Stata, large-scale surveys and cross-cultural experiments. The ultimate goal of the class is to prepare students for academic writing and research. Participants will be required to work with current research papers from economics, psychology, and anthropology.

General Course Requirements and Expectations:

The ultimate goal is to start preparing students for academic writing, including an honor's thesis. Heavy emphasis will hence be placed on reading and critically discussing existing literature, developing own research ideas, and mastering the empirical tools required to do so. Every student will have to develop their own research proposal in the course of the semester. Classes will usually consist of a combination of lectures and discussions, with a heavy slant towards the latter. Before each class, students will have to submit short critical evaluations of previously assigned research papers. Each week, two or three students will initiate and lead the discussion. I am dedicated to

getting students interested in the fascinating intersection of culture and economics, and ask that students contribute to this endeavor through active participation.

Prerequisites:

Students must have taken Econ1010a (Microeconomic Theory), Ec1010b (Macroeconomic Theory) and Econ1123 (Introduction to Econometrics). The class operates at a maximum capacity of 18 students. In allocating slots, economics concentrators will be prioritized. We will also prioritize students who have taken a variety of classes in psychology and anthropology.

Course Outline:

Date	Topic
8/30	Course Overview and Introduction: The Problem of Human Cooperation
9/11	Foundations I: WEIRD People
9/18	Foundations II: Cross-Cultural Experiments and Surveys
9/25	Prosocial Behavior Across Cultures
10/2	Trust Across Cultures
10/9	<i>No class: Columbus Day</i>
10/16	The Evolution and Economic Consequences of Religion
10/23	The Evolution of Language
10/30	Morality I: Concepts
11/6	Morality II: Implications for US Politics
11/13	Putting the Pieces Together: Social Organization, Cooperation and Cultural Evolution
11/20	The Effects of Economic Structure on Psychology and Cooperation Behavior
11/27	Student Presentations of Research Proposals

Guiding questions by week of class:

2. What is the nature of psychological and cultural variation around the globe, and in which sense are Western populations outliers on the global spectrum?
3. How can we use structured decision making experiments or large-scale surveys to measure different types of cultural variation?
4. How do prosocial giving and cooperation behavior vary across societies?
5. How does interpersonal trust vary across societies, why is this the case, and what are the economic implications?
6. What are moralizing gods, and how are they hypothesized to have affected human cooperation behavior?
7. In which sense does language depend on and reflect the structure of the economic environment?
8. How can we conceptualize and measure variation in moral values, social norms and emotions?
9. What are the implications of heterogeneity in moral values for US politics?
10. How and why did cooperation systems, family systems, and other cultural aspects coevolve?
11. How is human psychology shaped by economic systems and conditions?

Section Outline:

Date	Topic
9/6	Overview of Large-Scale Cross-Cultural Datasets
9/13	Introduction to Scientific Literature Search; Introduction to Regression Analysis in Stata I
tba	Introduction to Regression Analysis in Stata II
tba	Introduction to Regression Analysis in Stata III
tba	Lab-in-the-Field Experiments
tba	tba

Assignment List:

- Weekly (except when discussion leader): 2-page response to readings; due on Sunday before class (8 pm)
- Once: Discussion leader in lecture
- 1000-word proposal, due 10/31
- Final week: 15-minute presentation of project in class
- Research paper due 12/15

Note: All of the above assignments (save for the in-class presentations) should be uploaded to the course website by 8 pm on the due date.

Grading:

The course grade will be determined as follows:

- Class participation, discussion leadership (25%)
- Weekly responses to readings (10%)
- 1000-word proposal (10%)
- 15-minute presentation (15%)
- Final research paper (40%)

Note: There will be no exams.

Research Project:

The main requirement for the class is a research paper of length ≤ 15 pages, including all figures and tables, but excluding references. The paper must be at the intersection of economics and cultural psychology or anthropology, defined quite broadly. There are many ways to write an excellent paper for the class, including but not limited to:

1. Using existing large-scale cross-cultural datasets such as surveys.
2. Creating your own dataset by pulling together data from a novel source, such as scraping data from the web. Of course, you still need an interesting question to ask.
3. Replicating and extending an existing paper, using the dataset posted by the authors (these are not always available, but can often be found on journal websites or on the authors' own websites).
4. Writing a detailed design for a new study, including the underlying theory, how possible confounds and challenges will be solved, exactly how the study will be run, and power calculations to understand the necessary sample sizes.

Sections with Enrico will help you to get started on this, both in terms of content (examples of nice cross-cultural papers) and methodologically (where to find datasets, how to analyze them in Stata).

Readings and discussion leadership:

Students have to upload a two-page essay on the required readings on the course website before 8 pm on the Sunday before class. The essay should contain a summary of the key results, an interpretation, critical reflection, and open questions.

Optional readings are primarily meant for those interested in conducting research in the respective area; background readings are usually highly recommended general interest books for inspiration.

Class will be heavily discussion-based. In a typical lecture, Ben will start out with a broad overview of the topic for about 15-20 minutes. Then, the discussion leaders will take over. At the beginning of the semester, we will assign two students as discussion leaders for each lecture. These students are in charge of leading and structuring the discussion, including coming up with questions that they feel should be discussed or resolved during class. I strongly recommend that discussion leaders also take a look at the optional readings in the respective week.

Discussion leaders do not have to submit a response to the readings. Instead, they jointly submit a list of questions that they would like to address and discuss in class. This list should include a (small) set of questions that you think are too hard / long to be addressed in discussions, and that you would like me to lecture on for a few minutes. If there are no open questions for me, even better. The discussion leaders can design and structure the discussion in any way they like, but I recommend that discussion leaders start out by quickly summarizing the readings using a PPT presentation, and then to take these readings as starting points for questions and topics for further investigation.

Late Policy:

Students are expected to provide assignments on time (by 8 pm on the due dates). If assignments are turned in late, they will lose 1/3 of a letter grade per 24 hours late. Exceptions are given in case of medical or personal emergencies, if certified by a doctor or resident dean.

Collaboration Policy and Citing Your Sources:

You are encouraged to discuss with your classmates the choice of paper topics, to share information about data sources, and to help each other understand the papers better. Indeed, the exchange of knowledge, and making connections between different ideas and tools is at the heart of most research. But you must ensure that any written work you submit is original, and reflects your thoughts and understanding. You must follow standard academic citation practices, and properly cite your sources. Please familiarize yourself with the Harvard College Academic Integrity Policies, which will fully apply in this course:

<http://handbook.fas.harvard.edu/book/academic-integrity>

Week 1: Course Overview and Introduction: The Problem of Human Cooperation

Background:

Haidt, J. (2012). *The righteous mind: Why good people are divided by politics and religion*. Vintage.

Fei, X., Hamilton, G. G., & Wang, Z. (1992). *From the soil, the foundations of Chinese society: a translation of Fei Xiaotong's Xiangtu Zhongguo, with an introduction and epilogue*. Univ of California Press.

Greene, J. (2014). *Moral tribes: emotion, reason and the gap between us and them*. Atlantic Books Ltd.

Henrich, J. (2015). *The secret of our success: how culture is driving human evolution, domesticating our species, and making us smarter*. Princeton University Press.

Greif, A. (1994). Cultural beliefs and the organization of society: A historical and theoretical reflection on collectivist and individualist societies. *Journal of political economy*, 102(5), 912-950.

Week 2: Foundations I: WEIRD people

Required:

Henrich, J., Heine, S. J., & Norenzayan, A. (2010). The weirdest people in the world?. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 33, 61-135.

Optional:

Triandis, H. C., Bontempo, R., Villareal, M. J., Asai, M., & Lucca, N. (1988). Individualism and collectivism: Cross-cultural perspectives on self-ingroup relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 54(2), 323.

Gelfand, M. J., Raver, J. L., Nishii, L., Leslie, L. M., Lun, J., Lim, B. C., ... & Aycan, Z. (2011). Differences between tight and loose cultures: A 33-nation study. *Science*, 332(6033), 1100-1104.

Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological review*, 98(2), 224.

Background:

Triandis, H. C. (1995). *Individualism & collectivism*. Westview press.

Hofstede, G. H., & Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations*. Sage.

Nisbett, R. (2010). *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently*. Simon and Schuster.

Week 3: Foundations II: Cross-Cultural Experiments and Surveys

Required:

Falk, A., Becker, A., Dohmen, T. J., Enke, B., Huffman, D., & Sunde, U. (2016). Global evidence on economic preferences. (see my website)

Gneezy, U., Leonard, K. L., & List, J. A. (2009). Gender differences in competition: Evidence from a matrilineal and a patriarchal society. *Econometrica*, 77(5), 1637-1664.

Optional:

Apicella, C. L., Azevedo, E. M., Christakis, N. A., & Fowler, J. H. (2014). Evolutionary origins of the endowment effect: evidence from hunter-gatherers. *The American economic review*, 104(6), 1793-1805.

Week 4: Prosocial Behavior Across Cultures

Required:

Henrich, J., Boyd, R., Bowles, S., Camerer, C., Fehr, E., Gintis, H., & McElreath, R. (2001). In search of homo economicus: behavioral experiments in 15 small-scale societies. *The American Economic Review*, 91(2), 73-78.

Herrmann, B., Thöni, C., & Gächter, S. (2008). Antisocial punishment across societies. *Science*, 319(5868), 1362-1367.

Gächter, S., & Schulz, J. F. (2016). Intrinsic honesty and the prevalence of rule violations across societies. *Nature*.

Week 5: Trust Across Cultures

Required:

Knack, S., & Keefer, P. (1997). Does social capital have an economic payoff? A cross-country investigation. *The Quarterly journal of economics*, 112(4), 1251-1288.

Guiso, L., Sapienza, P., & Zingales, L. (2009). Cultural Biases in Economic Exchange?. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 1095-1131.

Optional:

Algan, Y., & Cahuc, P. (2010). Inherited trust and growth. *The American Economic Review*, 100(5), 2060-2092.

Algan, Y., & Cahuc, P. (2013). Trust and growth. *Annu. Rev. Econ.*, 5(1), 521-549.

Guiso, L., Sapienza, P., & Zingales, L. (2004). The role of social capital in financial development. *The American Economic Review*, 94(3), 526-556.

Nunn, N., & Wantchekon, L. (2011). The slave trade and the origins of mistrust in Africa. *The American Economic Review*, 101(7), 3221-3252.

Week 6: The Evolution and Economic Consequences of Religion

Required:

Wade, L. (2015). Birth of the moralizing gods. *Science*, 349(6251), 918-922.

Norenzayan, A., & Shariff, A. F. (2008). The origin and evolution of religious prosociality. *Science*, 322(5898), 58-62.

Campante, F., & Yanagizawa-Drott, D. (2015). Does religion affect economic growth and happiness? Evidence from Ramadan. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 130(2), 615-658.

Purzycki, B. G., Apicella, C., Atkinson, Q. D., Cohen, E., McNamara, R. A., Willard, A. K., ... & Henrich, J. (2016). Moralistic gods, supernatural punishment and the expansion of human sociality. *Nature*.

Optional:

Clingingsmith, D., Khwaja, A. I., & Kremer, M. (2009). Estimating the impact of the Hajj: religion and tolerance in Islam's global gathering. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 124(3), 1133-1170.

Norenzayan, A., Shariff, A. F., Gervais, W. M., Willard, A. K., McNamara, R. A., Slingerland, E., & Henrich, J. (2016). The cultural evolution of prosocial religions. *Behavioral and brain sciences*, 39, e1.

Barro, R. J., & McCleary, R. M. (2003). Religion and economic growth across countries. *American sociological review*, 68(5), 760-781.

Guiso, L., Sapienza, P., & Zingales, L. (2003). People's opium? Religion and economic attitudes. *Journal of monetary economics*, 50(1), 225-282.

Background:

Norenzayan, A. (2013). *Big gods: How religion transformed cooperation and conflict*. Princeton University Press.

Week 7: Evolution of Language

Required:

Chen, M. K. (2013). The effect of language on economic behavior: Evidence from savings rates, health behaviors, and retirement assets. *The American Economic Review*, 103(2), 690-731.

Galor, O., Özak, Ö., & Sarid, A. (2016). Geographical origins and economic consequences of language structures.

Optional:

Tabellini, G. (2008). Presidential address institutions and culture. *Journal of the European Economic Association*, 6(2-3), 255-294.

Sutter, M., Angerer, S., Rützler, D., & Lergetporer, P. (2015). The Effect of Language on Economic Behavior: Experimental Evidence from Children's Intertemporal Choices.

Week 8: Morality I: Concepts

Required:

Graham, J., Haidt, J., Koleva, S., Motyl, M., Iyer, R., Wojcik, S. P., & Ditto, P. H. (2012). Moral foundations theory: The pragmatic validity of moral pluralism.

Bernhard, H., Fischbacher, U., & Fehr, E. (2006). Parochial altruism in humans. *Nature*, 442(7105), 912-915.

Gelfand, M. J., Raver, J. L., Nishii, L., Leslie, L. M., Lun, J., Lim, B. C., ... & Aycan, Z. (2011). Differences between tight and loose cultures: A 33-nation study. *Science*, 332(6033), 1100-1104.

Bowles, S., & Gintis, H. (2003). Origins of human cooperation. *Genetic and cultural evolution of cooperation*, 2003, 429-43.

Optional:

Chen, Y., & Li, S. X. (2009). Group identity and social preferences. *The American Economic Review*, 99(1), 431-457.

Shweder, R. A., Much, N. C., Mahapatra, M., & Park, L. (1997). The "big three" of morality (autonomy, community, divinity) and the "big three" explanations of suffering.

Habyarimana, J., Humphreys, M., Posner, D. N., & Weinstein, J. M. (2007). Why does ethnic diversity undermine public goods provision?. *American Political Science Review*, 101(04), 709-725.

Week 9: Morality II: Implications for US Politics

Required:

Enke, B. (2017). Moral Values and Voting: Trump and Beyond. (see my website)

Background (reminder):

Graham, J., Haidt, J., & Nosek, B. A. (2009). Liberals and conservatives rely on different sets of moral foundations. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 96(5), 1029.

Haidt, J. (2012). *The righteous mind: Why good people are divided by politics and religion*. Vintage.

Greene, J. (2014). *Moral tribes: emotion, reason and the gap between us and them*. Atlantic Books Ltd.

Week 10: Putting the Pieces Together: Social Organization, Cooperation and Cultural Evolution

Required:

Enke, B. (2017). Kinship systems, cooperation and the evolution of culture. (see my website)

Optional:

Alesina, A., & Giuliano, P. (2013). Family Ties. *Handbook of Economic Growth*, 2, 177.

Greif, A. (1994). Cultural beliefs and the organization of society: A historical and theoretical reflection on collectivist and individualist societies. *Journal of political economy*, 102(5), 912-950.

Greif, A., & Tabellini, G. (2015). The Clan and the City: Sustaining Cooperation in China and Europe.

Tabellini, G. (2008). The scope of cooperation: Values and incentives. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 123(3), 905-950.

Moscona, J., Nunn, N., & Robinson, J. A. (2017). *Keeping It in the Family: Lineage Organization and the Scope of Trust in Sub-Saharan Africa* (No. w23196). National Bureau of Economic Research.

Schulz, J. F. (2016). The Churches' Bans on Consanguineous Marriages, Kin-Networks and Democracy.

Background:

Henrich, J. (2015). *The secret of our success: how culture is driving human evolution, domesticating our species, and making us smarter*. Princeton University Press.

Todd, E. (1985). *The explanation of ideology: Family structures and social systems*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Week 11: The Effects of Economic Structure on Cooperation Behavior

Required:

Talhelm, T., Zhang, X., Oishi, S., Shimin, C., Duan, D., Lan, X., & Kitayama, S. (2014). Large-scale psychological differences within China explained by rice versus wheat agriculture. *Science*, 344(6184), 603-608.

Enke, B. (2017). Economic Shocks and Human Morality. *Working Paper*.

Gneezy, U., Leibbrandt, A., & John, A. List (2015), "Ode to the Sea: Workplace Organizations and Norms of Cooperation," *Economic Journal*, forthcoming.

Optional:

Henrich, J., Ensminger, J., McElreath, R., Barr, A., Barrett, C., Bolyanatz, A., ... & Lesorogol, C. (2010). Markets, religion, community size, and the evolution of fairness and punishment. *Science*, 327(5972), 1480-1484.

Dell, M., Lane, N., & Querubin, P. (2017). *The Historical State, Local Collective Action, and Economic Development in Vietnam* (No. w23208). National Bureau of Economic Research.

Grosjean, P. (2014). A history of violence: The culture of honor and homicide in the US south. *Journal of the European Economic Association*, 12(5), 1285-1316.

Bazzi, S., Fiszbein, M., & Gebresilasse, M. (2017). Frontier Culture: Historical Roots and Persistence of “Rugged Individualism” in the United States, *Working Paper*.

Background:

Nisbett, R. E., & Cohen, D. (1996). *Culture of honor: the psychology of violence in the south*. Westview Press.