

Reading Guide Social Structures

Readings for 12 April 2011

READINGS (REQUIRED)

[A] Cass Sunstein, "Social Norms and Social Roles," *Columbia Law Review* 96:4 (May 1996): 903-968. Selections indicated below.

[B] Joseph Henrich, Steven Heine & Ara Norenzayan, "The Weirdest People in the World," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* (2010), Vol. 33: 61-135. Selections indicated below.

READINGS (OPTIONAL BACKGROUND)

[C] Lee Ross and Richard E. Nisbett (1991). *The person and the situation: Perspectives of social psychology*. New York: McGraw-Hill, pp. 27-58.

[A] Cass Sunstein, "Social Norms and Social Roles," *Columbia Law Review* 96:4 (May 1996): 903-968. Selections as follows:

Section I	READ	904-914
Section II	READ or SKIM	914-931
Section III	SKIP	931-939
Section IV	READ	939-947
Section V	READ	947-953
Section VI	SKIP or SKIM	953-965
Section VII	SKIP or SKIM	965-967
Conclusion	READ	967-968

Background

As you know from your reading guide of March 1st, Cass Sunstein (1954 –) is a professor of Law and Political Science who taught for many years at the University of Chicago. He is a currently a member the Obama administration, on leave from his position as Professor of Law at Harvard Law School. His numerous books and articles address a wide range of topics centering on issues of economics, justice, and political theory.

The essay we are reading appeared in 1996 in the *Columbia Law Review*. In it, Sunstein considers the implications of a large body of work in social psychology for legal theory and political philosophy. (Because this article is so rich and interesting, we are reading selections from it instead of from Sunstein's popular work *Nudge*.)

© Yale University 2012. Most of the lectures and course material within Open Yale Courses are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 3.0 license. Unless explicitly set forth in the applicable Credits section of a lecture, third-party content is not covered under the Creative Commons license. Please consult the Open Yale Courses Terms of Use for limitations and further explanations on the application of the Creative Commons license.

Passages to focus on/passages to skim

Please read sections I, II, IV, V and. You may skip section III. You may skip or skim sections VI and VII. I realize this looks like a lot, but you do not need to read the footnotes, and many of the pages contain only a half-page of main text. If you are feeling pressed for time, you may skim section II.

Terms and Concepts

Be sure that you understand how Sunstein is using the following terms and concepts:

Terms and Concepts: Ultimatum game; norm management, norm entrepreneur, norm bandwagon, norm cascade; social norms, social roles, and social meanings; willingness to pay (WTP)/willingness to accept (WTA); paternalism

Reading Questions:

As you read through the selection, keep in mind the following questions:

- (1) What does Sunstein mean by the term “norm management”? What role does it play in his larger argument?
- (2) What are the four descriptive and two normative claims that Sunstein makes at the end of section I.F? How does he argue for these claims in the remainder of the article?
- (3) What does Sunstein mean by the following terms: social norms, social roles, and social meanings? How does he make use of these notions in his later discussion?
- (4) What roles do shame and pride play in explaining behavior, according to Sunstein?
- (5) What is the difference between education and persuasion? What role does Sunstein think the government should play in this regard?

[B] Joseph Henrich, Steven Heine & Ara Norenzayan, “The Weirdest People in the World,” *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* (2010), Vol. 33: 61-135, selections as follows:

Section 1	READ	61-63
Section 2	SKIP	63-64
Section 3.1	SKIP	64-65
Section 3.2	READ	65-67
Section 3.3	SKIP	67-68
Section 3.4	SKIP	68
Section 3.5	SKIP	68-69
Section 3.6	READ	69
Section 3.7	READ	69
Section 4	READ	69-74
Section 5	SKIM	74-76
Section 6	SKIM	76-78
Section 7.1.1	READ	78-79

© Yale University 2012. Most of the lectures and course material within Open Yale Courses are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 3.0 license. Unless explicitly set forth in the applicable Credits section of a lecture, third-party content is not covered under the Creative Commons license. Please consult the Open Yale Courses Terms of Use for limitations and further explanations on the application of the Creative Commons license.

Section 7.1.2-6	SKIP	79-81
Section 7.2	READ	81
Section 7.3	SKIM	81-82
Section 8	READ	82-83
Commentaries		
Not Listed	SKIP	
Baumard & Sperber	READ	84-85
Ceci, Kahan, Braman	READ	87-88
Gaertner et al	READ	93-94
Stich	READ	110-111
Responses		
Not Listed	SKIP	
R.2.1 & R.2.2	SKIM or SKIP	115-116
R5	SKIM or SKIP	119-121

Background

Joseph Henrich is Professor of Psychology and Economics at the University of British Columbia. Trained as an anthropologist, he works on a range of topics in evolutionary psychology, behavioral economics and cultural anthropology. Steven Heine is Professor of Psychology at the University of British Columbia. Trained as a psychologist, he studies a range of topics in cultural psychology. Ara Norenzayan is also a Professor of Psychology at the University of British Columbia. Trained as a psychologist, he works on a range of topics relating to culture and cognition. If you are interested, you can read more about each of these authors on page 62 of the article.

The essay we are reading was originally published in 2010 in the journal *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, together with responses from some forty scientists and philosophers, and a reply by the three authors. In it, the authors present reasons for thinking that in a wide range of domains, Western, educated, industrialized, rich and democratic subjects are atypical.

Passages to focus on/passages to skim

Though this looks like a lot of reading, the target article itself is only 22 pages, of which we are reading only 15. We are also reading four brief (500-word) commentaries, and (if you choose) two brief responses to those commentaries. So the total reading here is less than 20 pages.

Reading Questions:

- (1) What are some of the differences between small-scale societies and industrialized societies that the authors discuss? What implications do they think these have?
- (2) What are some of the differences between Western and non-Western societies that the authors discuss? What implications do they think these have?

© Yale University 2012. Most of the lectures and course material within Open Yale Courses are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 3.0 license. Unless explicitly set forth in the applicable Credits section of a lecture, third-party content is not covered under the Creative Commons license. Please consult the Open Yale Courses Terms of Use for limitations and further explanations on the application of the Creative Commons license.

- (3) What are some of the differences between contemporary Americans and other Westerners that the authors discuss? What implications do they think these have?
- (4) What additional issues are raised by the commentaries of Baumard & Sperber, Ceci et al, Gaertner et al, and Stich?
- (5) In what ways does this article compliment the Sunstein article that we also read for today?

[C] OPTIONAL ARTICLE FOR THOSE SEEKING BACKGROUND IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Lee Ross and Richard E. Nisbett (1991). *The person and the situation: Perspectives of social psychology*. New York: McGraw-Hill, pp. 27-58.

Background

Lee Ross and Richard Nisbett are two of the most important and interesting contemporary social psychologists. They were graduate students together at Columbia University in the early 1960s, and went on to co-author two highly influential books: “Nisbett & Ross” (Nisbett, R. E., & Ross, L. (1980). *Human inference: Strategies and shortcomings of social judgment.*) and “Ross & Nisbett.” (Ross, L., & Nisbett, R. E. (1991). *The person and the situation: Perspectives of social psychology.*) The selections on V*2 are from the latter of these.

In the chapter included here, Ross & Nisbett provide an overview of some of the most influential (Western) social psychology studies of the last half-century. The text is written in an engaging and accessible style. It closes with a discussion of the Milgram experiments, which we discussed earlier this semester.

[Posted 04/08/2011]