

The Depths of Maximizing Behavior

Bridwell Institute Advanced Reading Group Syllabus

Spring 2023

Attendance is required. Your attendance and active participation are required. We will have 10 on-campus meetings. Students will be expected to attend all 10 on-campus meetings **plus one event during**

Be Critical. Don't agree unthinkingly with the readings or each other. Reasonable people disagree, so be reasonable.

Be Humble. The writers we read did not know everything and neither do y

2/9/23

Week 3. Reading Group Isn't About Reading III (But You Still Need to do the Reading)

1. Simler and Hanson, ch. 12 and 14, p. 205-224 and 241-259
2. Jose Ricon. 2018. "This Review is Not About Reviewing *The Elephant in the Brain*." *Nintil*, <https://nintil.com/this-review-is-not-about-reviewing-the-elephant-in-the-brain/>
3. Frank ch. 2, p. 29-50.
4. REQUIRED Podcast Episode: "Robin Hanson on Signaling and Self-Deception" (this was recorded ten years after the episode with the similar title and its content differs considerably), <https://conversationswithtyler.com/episodes/robin-hanson/>

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Week 4. The Law and Economics of Pirates and Superstition

1. Friedman et al. Introduction and ch. 7, p. vi-vii and 114-126.
2. Peter T. Leeson and Paola A. Suarez. 2015. "Superstition and Self-Governance." *Advances in Austrian Economics* 19: 47-66.
3. Peter T. Leeson. 2014. "Human Sacrifice." *Review of Behavioral Economics* 1: 137-165.
4. Frank ch. 3, p. 51-70.
5. REQUIRED Podcast Episode: "Peter Leeson on Why Trial-by-Fire Wasn't Barbaric and Why Pirates Were Democratic," <https://freakonomics.com/podcast/peter-leeson-on-why-trial-by-fire-wasnt-barbaric-and-why-pirates-were-democratic/>

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Week 5. Law Without a Functional Government

1. Friedman et al. ch. 8, 10, 11, and 12, p. 127-135 and 147-196.
 2. David Friedman. 1989. *The Machinery of Freedom*, chapters "What is Anarchy? What is Government?," "Police, Courts and Law – On the Market," and "The Stability Problem," p. 59-67, http://www.daviddfriedman.com/The_Machinery_of_Freedom_.pdf
 3. Frank ch. 4, p. 71-92
 4. REQUIRED Podcast Episode: "David Skarbek on Prison Gangs and the Social Order of the Underworld," <https://www.econtalk.org/david-skarbek-on-prison-gangs-and-the-social-order-of-the-underworld/>
- OPTIONAL FURTHER READING: Ryan H. Murphy 2015. "Heterogeneous Moral Views in the Stateless Society." *Libertarian Papers* 7, no. 1: 41-55.

NO MEETING ON 3/2/23; INSTEAD:

OPTIONAL Event 3/2/23: Texas Economic Forum event, "What Does the Research Say about Metro-Area Economic Freedom?" with Dean Stansel (SMU), Adam Hoffer (UW-La Crosse), Danielle Zanzalari (Seton Hall), and Justin Callais (Louisiana-Lafayette)

3/9/23

Week 6. What to Learn from Very Different Legal Systems

1. Friedman et al. ch. 2, 3, 9, 17, and 21, p. 27-54, 136-146, 269-288, and 322-332.

2. Frank ch. 5, p. 93-108

3. REQUIRED Podcast Episode: "David Friedman – Legal Systems Very Different from Ours,"

<https://ideashavingsex.squarespace.com/ideashavingsex/4-david-friedman-legal-systems-very-different->

4/6/23

Week 8. The Modern Usefulness of Systematic and Economistic Thinking I

1. Cowen ch. 1-4, p. 1-90.
2. Frank ch. 7, p. 133-148.

4/13/23

Week 9. The Modern Usefulness of Systematic and Economistic Thinking II

1. Cowen ch. 5-7, p. 91-172.
2. Frank ch. 8, p. 149-162.

4/20/23

Week 10. The Modern Usefulness of Systematic and Economistic Thinking III

1. Cowen ch. 8-10, p. 173-228.
2. Frank ch. 9, 163-182
3. REQUIRED Podcast episode: "Tyler Cowen on Culture, Autism, and Creating Your Own Economy,"
<https://www.econtalk.org/cowen-on-culture-autism-and-creating-your-own-economy/>