



# EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE

## Political Culture

Elias Dinas\*

SPS Seminar 2nd term 2020-2021

Nomothetic accounts of politics have postulated a deductive framework to explain political behavior, in principle applicable across space and over time. In this framework, self-interest is the driving force of human action, dictating decisions based on two ingredients, both exogenously given: preferences and institutions. Within this set-up, culture has been treated as a residual quantity, devoid of any analytic power.

The purpose of this course is to unpack this residual. We will look at the following questions:

- What is culture?
- How is it formed?
- How does it persist over time?
- What forces lead to cultural change?
- What are the economic and political implications of culture?

We will try to think about the impact of culture on the way people understand politics, form their attitudes and act politically. We will also pay attention to institutions and processes that either help culture transcend from one generation to the next or lead to its rupture.

Embedded in the discussion about culture are also other important concepts that we will look at, such as group identities and social norms. We will examine how social norms form, persist foster cultural persistence and under what conditions they change. We will look at the implications of culture on both economic and non-economic outcomes. In so doing, we will look at work on historical persistence and long-term effects. Finally, we will look at how culture is linked to the formation of group identity. We will look at both theoretical and empirical work on social identity theory.

Finally, we will look at the role of history in shaping political culture, paying also attention to institutions put in place to decide what historical narratives are to be transmitted within the polity. We will, that is, look into memory and explore its role in transforming political culture.

The seminar will be run via a discussion on the readings. Neither presentations nor response papers will be requested. You will however be eagerly asked to contribute in the discussion. Auditing is only accepted if you let me know well in advance, i.e. at least a week before the seminar. You will be expected to be as prepared as those taking credits.

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## Timeline

Sessions 1-2 Mondays 15:00-17:00

Sessions 3-10 Tuesdays 11:00-13:00

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## Assignment

After the end of the seminar, you will have to write a 3,000 word essay, which will have to include some sort of original empirical analysis. We can discuss this in more detail as the course proceeds. Tentative deadline will be **April 15, 2021**.

## Preliminary Course Outline

Required readings denoted by \*, although the distinction between what is compulsory and what is optional reading should be treated with caution. Ideally we all read everything and talk about all of the readings. Note that this is a **preliminary schedule**, and both the content and the order of readings will change prior to the first day of class. Also, I will denote required reading for all weeks after the end of week 1. Here are some short text that might be worth looking at in preparation ahead of the class:

- Jared Rubin, "Culture in Historical Political Economy:" [Broadstreet](#)
- Henrich, Joseph, Steven J. Heine, and Ara Norenzayan. "The weirdest people in the world?." *Behavioral and brain sciences* 33.2-3 (2010): 61-83; or the shorter version:
- Henrich, Joseph, Steven J. Heine, and Ara Norenzayan. "Most people are not WEIRD." *Nature* 466.7302 (2010): 29-29.

## Week 1: The Meaning of Culture

- \* Harari, Yuval Noah, *Sapiens, Part I*.
- \* Henrich, Joseph. 2015. *The Secret of Our Success: How Culture Is Driving Human Evolution, Domesticating Our Species, and Making Us Smarter*. Ch. 1-6.
- \* John Searle, *Making the Social World* (2010). The leading analytic social ontology, pp 3-18.
- \* D'Andrade, Roy. 2008. "Some Kinds of Causal Powers That Make Up Culture" In *Explaining Culture Scientifically*, by Melissa Brown (ed), pp. 19-36.
- \* Boyd, Robert and Peter J. Richerson, *Not by Genes Alone*, p. 58-98.
- D'Andrade, Roy Goodwin. "The cultural part of cognition." *Cognitive science* 5.3 (1981): 179-195.
- Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind, Part I*.
- Fehr, Ernst, and Karla Hoff. Tastes, castes, and culture: the influence of society on preferences. The World Bank, 2011. Link [here](#)
- Gintis, Herbert. "Solving the puzzle of prosociality." *Rationality and Society* 15.2 (2003): 155-187.
- Henrich, Joseph. 2020. *The WEIRDest People in the World: How the West Became Psychologically Peculiar and Particularly Prosperous*. Prelude: Your Brain has been Modified, Ch. 1 & 2.
- Either: Boyd, Robert and Peter J. Richerson. 1985. *Culture and the Evolutionary Process*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1, 3.
- Or: their [seminal paper](#).

## Week 2: The Origins of Culture

- \* Bazzi, Samuel, Martin Fiszbein, and Mesay Gebresilasse. "Frontier culture: The roots and persistence of "rugged individualism" in the United States." *Econometrica* 88.6 (2020): 2329-2368.
- \* Avner Greif, "Family structure, institutions, and growth: the origins and implications of western corporations." *American economic review* 96.2 (2006): 308-312.
- \* Alesina, Alberto, Giuliano, Paola and Nunn, Nathan. 2013. "On the Origins of Gender Roles: Women and the Plough,"
- \* Nunn, Nathan and Leonard Wantchekon. 2011. "The Slave Trade and the Origins of Mistrust in Africa." *American Economic Review*, 101(7):3221-52.
- Henrich, Joseph. 2020. *The WEIRDest People in the World: How the West Became Psychologically Peculiar and Particularly Prosperous*. Part II.
- Michalopoulos, Stelios. 2012. "The Origins of Ethnolinguistic Diversity," *American Economic Review*, 102(4): 1508-39.
- Alesina, Alberto and Nicola Fuchs-Schündeln. 2007. "Goodbye Lenin (or Not?): The Effect of Communism on People's Preferences," *American Economic Review*, 97(4):1507-1528.
- Dinas, Elias, and Ksenia Northmore-Ball. "The ideological shadow of authoritarianism." *Comparative Political Studies* 53:12 (2020): 1957-1991.
- Acharya, Avidit, Matthew Blackwell, and Maya Sen. "The Political Legacy of American Slavery." *The Journal of Politics* 78, no. 3 (2016): 621-641.
- Robert Putman, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, (Princeton University Press, 1993), ch. 5: "Tracing the Roots of Civic Community", pp. 121 - 162.

## Week 3: Cultural Transmission

- Axelrod, Robert. "The dissemination of culture: A model with local convergence and global polarization." *Journal of conflict resolution* 41.2 (1997): 203-226.
- Rogers, Everett, "Elements of Diffusion," p. 1-38 in *Diffusion of Innovations*, 5th edition.
- Christakis, Nicholas A., and James H. Fowler. "Social contagion theory: examining dynamic social networks and human behavior." *Statistics in medicine* 32.4 (2013): 556-577.
- Salganik, Matthew J., and Duncan J. Watts. "Leading the herd astray: An experimental study of self-fulfilling prophecies in an artificial cultural market." *Social psychology quarterly* 71.4 (2008): 338-355.
- Apicella, Coren L., et al. "Social networks and cooperation in hunter-gatherers." *Nature* 481.7382 (2012): 497-501.
- Lyons, Derek E. "The rational continuum of human imitation." *Mirror neuron systems*. Humana Press, 2008. 77-103.
- Axelrod, Robert. *The Evolution of Cooperation*, Ch. 4 & 5.
- Bisin, Alberto and Verdier, Thierry. 2011. "The Economics of Cultural Transmission and Socialization," in Benhabib, Jess and Bisin, Alberto and Jackson Matthew O. (eds.) *The Handbook of Social Economics* Vol. 1A, Elsevier.

## Week 4: Cultural Persistence

- Cohen, D., Nisbett, R. E., Bowdle, B. F., & Schwarz, N. 1996. "Insult, Aggression, and the Southern Culture of Honor: An "Experimental Ethnography." *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 70(5), 945.
- Grosjean, Pauline. 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.
- Voigtlander, Nico and Voth, Hans-Joachim. 2012. "Persecution Perpetuated: The Medieval Origins of Anti-Semitic Violence in Nazi Germany," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 127(3), 1339-1392.
- Galtung, Johan. "Cultural violence." *Journal of peace research* 27.3 (1990): 291-305.
- Guiso, Luigi, Paola Sapienza, and Luigi Zingales. "Long-term persistence." *Journal of the European Economic Association* 14.6 (2016): 1401-1436.
- Simpser, Alberto, Dan Slater, and Jason Wittenberg. "Dead but not gone: Contemporary legacies of communism, imperialism, and authoritarianism." *Annual Review of Political Science* 21 (2018): 419-439.
- Michalopoulos, Stelios, and Melanie Meng Xue. *Folklore*. No. w25430. National Bureau of Economic Research, 2019.
- Charnysh, Volha. "Historical Legacies of Interethnic Competition: Anti-Semitism and the EU Referendum in Poland." *Comparative Political Studies* 48.13 (2015): 1711-1745.
- Laitin, David D. "Marginality: a microperspective." *Rationality and Society* 7.1 (1995): 31-57.

## Week 5: Social Norms

- Elster, Jon. "Norms." in *The Oxford handbook of analytical sociology*. 2009.
- Elster, Jon. "Social norms and economic theory." *Journal of economic perspectives* 3.4 (1989): 99-117.
- Bicchieri, Christina. 2006. "The Rules We Live By," in her *Grammar of Society*.
- Timur Kuran, 1997. *Private Truths, Public Lies: The Social Consequences of Preference Falsification*, Ch. 1.
- Bicchieri, Cristina. 2017. *Norms in the Wild: How to Diagnose, Measure, and Change Social Norms*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 1.
- Elster, Jon. 1989. *The Cement of Society: A Study of Social Order*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Ch. 3.
- Robert Ellickson, *Order Without Law*, Ch. 1-6 & 11-13.
- Cialdini, Robert. B., & Trost, Melanie. R. 1998. Social influence: Social norms, conformity and compliance. In D. T. Gilbert, S. T. Fiske, & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *The handbook of social psychology* (p. 151–192). McGraw-Hill.
- Schmidt, Marco FH, and Michael Tomasello. "Young children enforce social norms." *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 21.4 (2012): 232-236.
- Axelrod, Robert. "An evolutionary approach to norms." *The American political science review* (1986): 1095-1111.

## Week 6: Cultural Change vs Social Change

- Mackie, Gerry. 1996. "Ending Footbinding and Infibulation: A Convention Account." *American Sociological Review*, 999-1017.
- Greif, Avner, and David D. Laitin. "A theory of endogenous institutional change." *American political science review* (2004): 633-652.
- Vogt, Sonja, Nadia Ahmed Mohammed Zaid, Hilal El Fadil Ahmed, Ernst Fehr, and Charles Efferson. 2016. "Changing cultural attitudes towards female genital cutting." *Nature* 538, no. 7626: 506-509.
- Bursztyn, Leonardo, Georgy Egorov, and Stefano Fiorin. From extreme to mainstream: How social norms unravel. No. w23415. National Bureau of Economic Research, 2017.
- Bursztyn, Leonardo, Alessandra L. González, and David Yanagizawa-Drott. Misperceived social norms: Female labor force participation in Saudi Arabia. No. w24736. National Bureau of Economic Research, 2018.
- Tankard, Margaret E., and Elizabeth Levy Paluck. "The Effect of a Supreme Court Decision Regarding Gay Marriage on Social Norms and Personal Attitudes." *Psychological Science* 28, no. 9: 1334-44.
- Álvarez-Benjumea, Amalia, and Fabian Winter. "Normative Change and Culture of Hate: An Experiment in Online Environments." *European Sociological Review* 34, no. 3: 223-37.
- Valentim, Vicente. 2020. Into the Parliament and into the Mainstream: How Radical Right Parties Become Normalized. *Comparative Political Studies*, Forthcoming.
- Dinas, Elias, Sergi Martínez, and Vicente Valentim. 2020. "The Normalization of Stigmatized Political Symbols." Available at SSRN 3516831.
- Nicolai Petro, *Crafting Democracy: How Novgorod Has Coped with Rapid Social Change*, (Cornell University Press, 2004), ch. 4 "Three Keys to Understanding Rapid Social Change," pp. 95-125.
- Bikhchandani, Sushil, David Hirshleifer, and Ivo Welch. "A theory of fads, fashion, custom, and cultural change as informational cascades." *Journal of political Economy* 100.5 (1992): 992-1026.
- Fearon, James D. "Chunky Shoes." (1998).
- Fouka, Vicky, "Social Change" in [Broadstreet](#)

## Week 7: The Politics of Culture

- David Laitin, *Hegemony and Culture: Politics and Religious Change among the Yoruba*, University of Chicago Press, 1986, Ch. 1, "The Two Faces of Culture", p. 1-20.
- Myron Aronoff, *Israeli Visions and Divisions: Cultural Change and Political Conflict* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1995), ch. 3. "The Manipulation of Political Culture under the Likud", pp. 43 - 67
- Posner, Daniel N. "The political salience of cultural difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas are allies in Zambia and adversaries in Malawi." *American Political Science Review* (2004): 529-545.

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**Week 8:** Culture and Public Good Provision

**Week 9:** Ethnic and national identity

**Week 10:** Culture and Public Memory

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