

Collective Behavior

Summer 2019

Ewha International Summer College

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When: Mon to Thu, 9:00-11:30AM
Where: TBA
Office Hours: by appointment

Overview

This course examines how various forms of collective behavior and collective action (e.g., cultural fads, going viral, residential segregation, panics, riots, protest, and social movements) emerge from interactions of individuals. We approach this question using various theoretical and analytic tools developed in diverse fields of social science, including sociology (social movements, organizational behavior, social networks), economics (game theory and behavioral economics), and social psychology. In particular, this course draws on the insights from social network analysis to explain the emergence of collective behavior and collective action. Social network analysis takes seriously the proposition that behaviors of individual units or actors are to be understood in social context, and tries to depict that context with some specificity. While the main objective of the course is to help you to form an understanding of how various kinds of collective behavior and collective action arise, we will also aim to learn basic concepts and analytic tools of social network analysis and other theories in sociology, psychology, and behavioral economics.

Format

Classes consist of my lectures and discussions about the issues raised in the reading assignments. I will come to each meeting with a prepared presentation on the topics. I encourage questions, commentary, and discussion at all times, and will invite such at the beginning of each session—as well in the course of my presentation. The goal is for participants to leave room with a good sense of the content of the body of literature covered in each lecture, as well as some appreciation for open issues that surround it.

Readings

Students are required to read about 30 to 50 pages per lecture. Some readings are noted as ‘optional’ but I strongly advise you to read them as well. All readings will be made available online. There is no required textbook for this class.

Requirements

Attendance and participation (20%)

- Students are expected to attend all lectures during the session.
- Students are expected to do assigned readings and actively engagement in lecture and contribute to the class discussion

Three in-class quizzes (10% each)

One short essay (1,000 words maximum) (20%)

- More information will be provided in class

Final Exam (30%)

- Final exam: Open-notes exam; intended to integrate the lectures and readings of the course

Academic Honesty:

You are expected to follow the University's rules and regulations pertaining to academic honesty and integrity.

Daily topics and reading

NOTE: The readings below may be updated before the summer session begins.

Day 1 (June 27) Introduction and Background

Topics:

- Introduction
- Course logistics
- What do we study & Why?
- Brief history of sociology of collective behavior and collective action
- Collective behavior vs. Collective action?

Readings:

- Atul Gawande, “Slow Ideas: Some innovations spread fast. How do you speed the ones that don’t?” *The New Yorker Magazine* (2013)
(<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/07/29/slow-ideas>)

Day 2 (July 1) Anybody wants free ride? Public good and the dilemmas of collective action

Topics:

- What is public good?
- The tragedy of the commons
- The free-ride problems
- Conditions of successful collective actions

Readings:

- Marwell and Oliver, *The Critical Mass in Collective Action* (Ch1 & 2)

Day 3 (July 2) Life as a game: The art of strategy

Topics:

- Basic assumptions and concepts of the game theory
- Game theory and collective action problem
- Homo Economicus, Homo Reciprocan

Readings:

- Dixit and Nalebuff, *The Art of Strategy*, Chapter 3 and 4

Day 4 (July 3) Captain Spock vs. Homer Simpson: Enter Psychologists

Topics:

- Heuristics and biases
- Decision-making/judgement under uncertainty
- Prospect theory

Readings:

- Kahneman, *Thinking Fast and Slow* (selected chapters)
- Lewis, “Obama’s way”

Day 5 (July 4) Nudging: The science of behavioral modification?

Topics:

Behavioral economics
Nudging and choice architects
Behavioral modification

Readings:

- Thaler and Sunstein, *Nudge*, Chapter 5
- New York Time, “Britain’s Ministry of Nudges”
- (Optional) Slater, “A Million First Dates: How Online Romance Is Threatening Monogamy”

Day 6 (July 8) *Everything is connected: Life in a connected world*

Topics:

Basic concepts and tools of social network analysis
Six-degrees of separation
Strength of weak ties
Network homophily

Readings:

- Christakis and Fowler, “In the Thick of It”
- Duncan Watts, “Small Worlds”
- (Optional) Malcolm Gladwell, “Six Degrees of Lois Weisberg”

Day 7 (July 9) *Micro-motives, Macro-behaviors*

Topics:

Everyone’s a little bit racist? Tipping model of residential segregation
How to start a movement? Threshold model of collective action
Information cascades

Readings:

- Dixit and Nalebuff, “Why Did They Leave”
- Watts, “Thresholds, Cascades, and Predictability”
- (optional) Schelling, “Sorting and Mixing”

Day 8 (July 10) *Sociology of “going viral”: Why the rich get richer?*

Topics:

Why do some songs/movies/books become a hit while (most) others don’t?
Network effects and economics of increasing returns
Network goods and inequality

- Salganik, Dodds, and Watts, “Experimental Study of Inequality and Unpredictability in an Artificial Cultural Market”
- Paul DiMaggio and Filiz Garip, “How Network Externalities Can Exacerbate Intergroup Inequality?”
- (Optional) Lieberman and Lynn, “Popularity as Taste”

Day 9 (July 11) *Spreading germs and (maybe) happiness? Structure of social epidemics*

How does an epidemic happen?
How does a disease spread out on social networks?

- Christakis and Fowler, “The Spread of Obesity in a Large Social Network Over 32 Years”
- Christakis and Fowler, “This Hurts Me As Much As It Hurts You”
- (Optional) Bearman et al., “Chains of Affection: The structure of Adolescent Romantic and Sexual Networks”

Day 10 (July 15) *That’s what friends are for: Interpersonal influence and social diffusion*

Topics:

Complex diffusion and strength of strong ties
 Interpersonal processes in decision-making
 Different models of social influence
 Identity, status, and social influence

Readings:

- Centola, “The spread of behavior in an online social network experiment”
- Ronald S. Burt. “Social contagion and innovation: Cohesion versus structural equivalence”

Day 11 (July 16) *Why do all organizations look alike? Institution and isomorphism*

Topics:

Institutions and diffusion
 Organizational isomorphism
 Three logics of institutionalism

Readings:

- DiMaggio and Powell, “The Iron Cage Revisited”
- (Optional) Dobbin et al. “Diversity Management in Corporate America”

Day 12 (July 17) *Social capital: Science of good community*

What is social capital?
 What does social capital do?
 Collective efficacy and neighborhood effects

- Robert Putnam, “Social Capital and Institutional Success”
- Robert Sampson et al. “The Theory of Collective Efficacy”

Day 13 (July 18) *Will the next revolution be tweeted? How social movements really happen?*

Topics:

Dynamics of social movements in a hyper-networked world

Readings:

- Doug McAdam, “Political Process Model”
- Lewis et al. “The Structure of Online Activism”
- (Optional) Malcolm Gladwell, “Small Change: Why the revolution will not be tweeted?”

Day 14 (July 22) *New Big Brothers? Media, Public Opinion, and Collective Behavior*

Topics:

Does advertising work?
 Are Fox News and MSNBC polarizing America?
 The age of “big data” and micro-targeting

Readings:

- Michael Shudson, “The Advertiser’s Perspective”
- Charles Duhigg, “How Companies Learn Your Secrets”

Day 15 (July 23) *Final Exam*