

SOC 590 – Norms, Institutions, and Social Action

<http://faculty.washington.edu/kitts/soc590.html>

Class Meetings: Savery Hall, Room 313

Thursdays 1:30-3:20 pm

Office Hours- By appointment

TENTATIVE SYLLABUS

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This seminar will investigate the emergence, reinforcement, and change of social norms and institutions. We will examine self-organizing solutions to dilemmas of resource management, observe the maintenance of informal norms among California cattle ranchers, study the demography of rules in formal organizations, and model the dynamics of technology protocols and revolutionary political change. Our readings draw from important work in Political Science, Anthropology, Economics, and Law, as well as classic and contemporary sociological theory.

In addition to reading the scheduled material, students will submit informal responses (2-3 pages) to the weekly reading, by noon on the day before our class meeting. These responses may be submitted electronically through the course web page. Students will take an active role in leading discussion and in responding to each other's work. Each student will also work on a seminar project that will contribute to her/his own research, such as a thesis chapter, grant application, or prospectus for a research article.

BOOKS

- Douglas, Mary. 1986. *How Institutions Think*.
- Ostrom, Elinor. 1990. *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions*.
- North, Douglass C. 1990. *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance*.
- Ellickson, Robert C. 1991. *Order Without Law: How Neighbors Settle Disputes*.
- Posner, Eric A. 2000. *Law and Social Norms*.
- Kuran, Timur. 1995. *Private Truths, Public Lies*.
- March, James G., Schulz, Martin, & Xueguang Zhou. 2000. *The Dynamics of Rules: Change in Written Organizational Codes*.

Response papers and discussion questions may focus on selected parts of the assigned reading. For some weeks, I may also suggest other articles or books as "further reading." These will be optional, of course, but you may want to take a look at some of this material if it is relevant to your own project.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 – April 4 – Introduction

INTRODUCTION

Week 2 – April 11 – Cognitive/Cultural Foundations

Durkheim, Emile. 1984. *The Division of Labor In Society* Book One, Chapter 2, pp. **31-67**

Durkheim, Emile. 1909. “Sociologie religieuse et théorie de la connaissance” [In 2nd Edition, *Rules of the Sociological Method*, **236-240**]

Douglas, Mary. 1986. *How Institutions Think*, pp. **1-67, 111-128**)

Week 3 – April 18 – Instrumental Foundations

North, Douglass C. 1990. “Institutions.” *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance*. (pp. **3-69**)

Ostrom, Elinor. 1990. *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. (pp. **1-57, 58-102**)

Week 4 – April 25 – Institutional Change

North, Douglass C. 1990. “Institutional Change.” *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance*. (pp. **73-104**)

Ostrom, Elinor. 1990. *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. (pp. 103-181, **182-216**)

Week 5 – May 2 – Law, Norms, and Social Welfare

Ellickson, Robert C. 1991. *Order Without Law: How Neighbors Settle Disputes*, (pp. **1-11, 22-28, 29-120, 123-166**)

Week 6 – May 9 – The Emergence of Norms in Close-Knit Groups

Ellickson, Robert C. 1991. *Order Without Law: How Neighbors Settle Disputes*, (pp. **167-286**)

Week 7 – May 16 – Law and Social Norms

Posner, Eric. 2000. *Law and Social Norms*.

Week 8 – May 23 – Common Knowledge and Normative Change

Kuran, Timur. 1995. *Private Truths, Public Lies*. (pp. 3-59, **60-83**, **84-117**,
118-154, **247-309**)

Week 9 – May 30 – The Dynamics of Rules in Organizations

March, James G., Schulz, Martin, and Xueguang Zhou. 2000.
The Dynamics of Rules: Change in Written Organizational Codes
(pp. **5-27**, 28-55, **56-82**, **106-202**)

Week 10 – June 6 – Synthesis

Seminar project presentations (may include readings assigned by seminar participants).