Econ 312 Evolutionary Economics Syllabus

Donald Cox Fall 2018

Reading: Richard Dawkins,

* Donald Cox, Bruce Hansen and Emmanuel Jimenez. 2004. "How Responsive are Private Transfers to Income? Evidence from a Laissez-faire Economy."

Journal of Public Economics. Possible explanations for why family members help each other, plus implications for government transfer programs.

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Reading: Biological forces act in concert with environmental influences; they can't be analyzed in a vacuum.

William H. McNeill. 1997. "History Upside Down." New York Review of Books. (A review of Guns, Germs and Steel).

Jeffrey D. Sachs, Andrew D. Mellinger and John L. Gallup. 2001. "The Geography of Poverty and Wealth." Scientific American.

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VI. Ways that Non-relatives Cooperate and Ways They Fight

Reading:

Can having a hair-trigger temper actually facilitate rather than discourage trade? How about a guilty conscience? The term "emotion" often implies being out of control and irrational. But maybe emotions complement rather than work against our rational side.

Michael Waldman. 1990. Review of Passions within Reason: The Strategic Role of the Emotions, by Robert Frank.

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Reading: How many people can you keep track of? Does social media make a difference?

* Edward P. Lazear. 1999. "Culture and Language." Journal of Political Economy.

When to assimilate and when not to.

Nicholas Lemann. 2010. "Terrorism Studies: Social scientists do counterinsurgency." The New Yorker.

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Reading: How does "fake news" happen? What are the economic consequences of conformity?

* Sushil Bikhchandani, David Hirshleifer, and Ivo Welch. 1998. "Learning from the Behavior of Others: Conformity, Fads, and Informational Cascades." Journal of Economic Perspectives. An analysis of how ideas can spread by imitative behavior.

George A. Akerlof, "Social Distance and Social Decisions." 1997. Econometrica. The economic implications of wanting to be close to your neighborhood friends.

Robinson Meyer. 2018. "The Grim Conclusions of the Largest-Ever Study of Fake News." Atlantic.

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Reading:

Why did pedophilia in the Catholic Church go unreported for so long, and also why the scandal broke so suddenly? (The same thing's happened with the #MeToo movement.) And what does these events have in common with political revolutions?

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Reading: Why do people procrastinate? Is it because of a quirk in their utility functions, or because of their upbringing?

James Surowiecki. 2010. "Later: What does procrastination tell us about ourselves?" The New Yorker.

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Reading: How 'groupish' are humans?

Jonathan Haidt. 2012. "Why Are We So Groupish?" Chapter 9 of The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion.

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