

Anthro 4118
The Good Cause – Psychology Anthropology of Moral Crusades
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Course description

Why do people join moral crusades? These are social movements based on powerful moral intuitions, ranging from the abolitionist and suffragette movements to witch hunts, insurgency and ethnic riots. People who join these movements are persuaded to work for “the good cause”. This course introduces psychological anthropology perspectives on the reasons why people would feel motivated by such causes. We will examine a series of empirical cases, including recent events, and assess the relevance of models based on individual psychological dynamics, intuitive moral capacities, and human motivation for participation in collective action. Each seminar session includes a background presentation by the instructor, followed by a discussion of the assigned readings, as well as student presentations.

Prerequisites

Undergraduates: L48-160B Introduction to Cultural Anthropology or L48-150A Introduction to Human Evolution or L33 Psych 4099- Human Evolutionary Psychology or L33 Psych 315 -Introduction to Social Psychology.

OR: graduate standing in anthropology.

Class structure

Each class will be divided in three sections. [1] Instructor’s lecture on the intellectual and historical background to the readings. Discussion of students’ queries about the readings. [2] Student presentation and discussion, jointly led by student presenter and instructor: How does the particular case-study in the presentation illustrate or challenge the theoretical perspectives in the readings? [3] Generalization (45mn): Discussion moderated by instructor: In what way do these materials (readings + presentation + discussion) suggest a general view of social movements and mobilization, a general account of this phenomenon in very different societies? Connection to previous readings.

Evaluation

a. [25%] Posted comments on readings and participation in discussion. For each class, the reading materials consist in one or two articles from scientific journals (and in one case a short book). You will be expected to email the instructor (by Tuesday night) short answers (a few lines) to the following questions: What was the main point of the articles? What were the authors trying to achieve? How does the evidence support the authors’ conclusions? During class, we will go through these questions again. You will be expected to be prepared to participate in the discussion, especially to expand on your emailed comments.

b. [20%] A short class presentation. This is a 15-25mn presentation of a source that is relevant to the topic discussed that day. These will be outside the general reading list, so other students will not have read them. You will be expected to ask the same questions as for the general readings (see above), make the answers clear to fellow-students, and lead a short discussion on the article. If you are unsure about your presentation, you can email it to me at least two days before class, so I can offer suggestions.

c. [55%] Two short papers on empirical cases, with discussion of relevant theoretical frameworks in explanation of each specific case. Each paper should be about 1500 words long. Each should use material from several scholarly sources. In the same way as for presentations, you can send me your draft paper, at least a week before due date, for feedback and suggestions.

Topics for the 1st paper: choose one.

- A. Do suicide-bombers see their actions as part of a moral cause?
- B. How did the abolitionists (England, USA) manage to get political influence?

Topics for the 2nd paper: choose one.

- A. What were the arguments and rhetoric of the suffragette movement?
- B. What are the main elements of the rhetoric against gay marriage?

Syllabus

1. Jan 20. Introduction. Understanding moral crusades & mobilization.

Course presentation: what are moral crusades? An example: Abolitionism in England and America - How a moral movement translates into politics. Examples of modern Internet moral movements. Goal of the course: to understand connection between moralization of a cause and recruitment dynamics.

2. Jan 27. Why 'cultural norms' explain nothing. The case of witchcraft

Why norms are not sufficient. Witchcraft crazes in classical times (England, New England) and modern (Africa, London). Classical studies of cultural norms and concepts do not capture the dynamics of accusations and consensus.

Readings:

- a. **Evans-Pritchard Ch 4**
- b. **Godbeer 2003 How Believe Witchcraft**

Presentation: **Thomas 2007 Witchcraft HIVAID**

3. Feb 3. Collective action. Rational choice and participation.

Individual participation in collective action. Models based on widespread norms ignore this. Rational choice models and their approach to participation. Cost-benefit analysis and participation escalation.

Readings

- a. **Hechter 1997 Sociological RCT**
- b. **Jasper 2015 Social Movements Ann Rev**

Presentation: **Willer 2008 Groups Reward Individual Sacrifice**

4. Feb 10. Human groups and coalitional psychology

Coalitional psychology. The evolutionary background of human "groupishness". How and why group membership is a fundamental human need. Consequences for group formation large-scale societies.

Readings:

- a. **2015BoyerFiratVanLeeuwenCoalitionalIndex**
- b. **Delton 2010 Semantics Concept Newcomer**

Presentation: **Lev-Ari 2010 Why don't we believe non-native**

5. Feb 17. Ethnicity as recruitment.

Distinction between social categories and groups. Why ethnicity by itself does not explain mobilization for ethnic causes. The internal dynamics of ethnic movements and their effects on mobilization.

Readings:

- a. **BrubakerEthnicWithoutGroups**
- b. **KuranEthnicNorms2000**

Presentation: **Karp 1993 Raising the minimum in the minimal g.pdf**

6. Feb 24. Ethnic violence

Who participates, why? The dynamics of these events and their common features across time and places. Cases in Indonesia, Malaysia, Rwanda. How some minor events escalate into full-blown riots. Descriptive models and psychological accounts of motivation.

Readings:

- a. **Horowitz 1998 Structure Strategy Ethnic Conflict**
- b. **White 2012 History Today Rwanda**
- c. **Luft 2015 Rwanda Individual Participation**

Presentation: **Wiessner 2006 From spears to M**

7. March 2. Outrage and retaliation

How and why some specific events (e.g., Guernica, Deir Yassin, trigger mass reactions. A group-dynamics interpretation. Application to modern cases.

Readings:

- a. **Kalyvas 2000 Civil War Model**
- b. **Bhavnani 2009 Rumor Dynamics in Ethnic Violenc**
- c. Sources TBA on recent events.

Presentation: **Kopper 2014 Guernica Visual Rhetoric**

March 4. Optional: send draft version of 1st paper

8. March 9. Evolution and moral psychology.

Human moral psychology, its evolutionary origins, neuro-cognitive underpinnings, social cues that trigger moral evaluation and motivation.

Readings:

- a. **Baumard 2013 BBS Mutualistic Morality**
- b. **DeScioli 2009 Mysteries Morality**
- c. **Haidt 2004 Intuitive Ethics Culture**

Presentation: **Vandello 2011 Moral Judg of Powerless-powerful**

March 11. !!! First paper due !!!

9. March 23. Moralization of health.

The moral crusades about health. Case studies: [a] obesity as a moral issue, [b] anti-vaccination movements. Possible models: Other people's health as a public good, or reputation effects of signaling. Consequences for mobilization.

Readings:

- a. **Kurzban 2001 Evolutionary origins of stigmatiz**
- b. **Kata 2012 Anti-vaccine PoMo**
- c. **Tafuri 2014 Anti-Vaccine & HCWs**

Presentation: **van Leeuwen et al 2015 EP obesity stigma**

10. March 30. Stigmatization as a moral cause

The case of anti-gay movements, rumors and policies in Africa. Connection to threat-detection. Why contagion themes result in collective motivation.

Readings:

- a. **Herek The Psychology of Sexual Prejudice**
 - b. **Brambilla 2012 Intergroup Threat and Outgroup**
- Presentation: **Essien 2009 Cutting the Head Ghana Homophobia**

11. April 6. Rumor psychology

Why and how do people believe in and spread rumors - classical social psychology models. The evolutionary re-interpretation. Reputation effects of information and the motivation to spread information.

Readings:

- a. **Allport 1945 The basic psychology of rumor**
- b. **Boyer 2015 TRI Competence**
- c. **DiFonzo 2013 Rumour research can douse digital**

Presentation: **Einwiller 2008 Rumor Denial Favors Rumor**

12. April 13. Crazy rumors and panics

Poisoned wells, blood libel, penis snatching, etc. Why do people believe in extraordinary things? Irrationality and social communication interpretations.

Readings:

- a. **Heath 2001 Emotional selection urban legends,**
- b. **Fessler 2014 Negatively-Biased Credulity and t**

Presentation: **Dzokoto 2005 Understanding Genital-Shrinking E**

13. April 20. Good causes. The Civil Rights Movement

Good causes. Mobilization: Civil rights with internal (commitment) dynamics and external (moralization) dynamics

Readings:

- a. **Bloom 2015 Dynamics Truman Civil Rights**
- b. **Andrews 1997 Civil Right Social Movement & Politics**

Presentation: **Ling 2006 Social Capital South Civil Rights copy**

April 22. Optional: send draft 2nd paper

14. April 27. Good causes. Changing cultural norms.

Good causes. Mobilization to change norms: FMG, other examples. Are cultural norms malleable? In what direction?

Readings:

a. **Nichols 2002 Genealogy of Norms**

b. **TheLancet 2013 Elimination FGM**

Presentation: **Zwicker 2014 End of dueling in German Universities**

April 29: !!! Second paper is due !!!!

NO FINAL EXAM