Wednesday - January 15, 2014

Class: Introduction to the course
9:30am - 10:45am · Lecture


Monday - January 20, 2014

Class: Class cancelled (travel)
9:30am - 10:45am · Lecture

Wednesday - January 22, 2014

Class: Durkheim on the link between morality and society
9:30am - 10:45am · Lecture


We begin by examining the work of the sociologist that is best known for linking moral social diversity: Emile Durkheim. We will see that something like his influential distinction between mechanical and organic solidarity reappears in various forms in more contemporary attempts to link culture, morality, and mind.

Monday - January 27, 2014

Class: Application: Punishment and the Moral Order
9:30am - 10:45am · Lecture


We examine an application of the Durkheimian connection between solidarity and attitudes towards crime and punishment in contemporary societies.

Wednesday - January 29, 2014

Class: Max Weber on Ideas and Worldviews
9:30am - 10:45am · Lecture


Sunday - February 2, 2014

Assignment: Morality and Society: Accounting for the "Maquiladora Murders" (Application Paper I)
Due: February 2, 2014
The so-called "Maquiladora Murders" (also known as the "Female homicides in Ciudad Juarez and the Feminicidio") are a wave of killings in the Mexican bordertown of Ciudad Juarez that started in the early 1990s and have continued ever since. Official estimates of the number of women killed state that almost 400 women have been murdered (most in gruesome fashion) although unofficial estimates by human rights groups are much larger (approaching 600).

Wikipedia entry: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Female_homicides_in_Ciudad_Juarez

NY Times Article (2002): goo.gl/gXHyN

The feminicides in Ciudad Juarez are a major sociological (and criminological) mystery (in that to date they continue to confound the experts). Various explanations have been offered (drug trafficking, serial killers, organ trafficking, etc.) none of which are very satisfying.

In this short paper, I want you to (after consulting the Wikipedia and New York Times articles linked to above, as well as any independent research that you might want to engage in), to put yourself in WWDS?* mode, and consider the possibility of the female homicides in Juarez as an example of punishment in Durkheim's sense. That is, rather than providing an exclusively instrumental explanation, I want you to look at this phenomenon as an example of a collective (although not necessarily coordinated) response to a disruption in the moral order.

Requirements: outline exactly how the killings fit the Durkheimian pattern of crime and punishment, what sort of collective morality has been disrupted (hint: it's got something to do with traditional gender relations)? What are the sources of this disruption? How can the violence be seen as a (somewhat desperate) attempt to restore what has been lost?

*What Would Durkheim say?

Specs: 1000 - 2000 words, 12pt Times New Roman Font, Double-spaced

Monday - February 3, 2014
Class: Application: The Protestant Ethic as Culture  
9:30am - 10:45am · Lecture


Class: Morality and Cultural Worldviews (or why bad things happen to good people)  
9:30am - 10:45am · Lecture


Wednesday - February 5, 2014

Assignment: The Protestant Ethic as Culture: Application Paper II  
Due: February 9, 2014

A key claim of the readings for this week is that the Protestant Ethic might have lost its connection to religion (and Protestantism!) but continues to be highly pervasive as a cultural value, organizing and influencing American moral judgments across a wide range of issues.

Uhlmann and collaborators, drawing on Weber, show that Americans (regardless of religious affiliation) are more likely to use intuitive Protestant-Puritan values when assessing the basis of merit in the workplace (leaning towards individualism), in valuing hard work and devaluing social groups who are perceived to not work as hard, in linking sexual purity and the work ethic.

In this paper, I want you to select a particular social issue, and show (e.g. by quoting a magazine or news article, a political speech, or drawing from your own personal experience) how this issue is distinctively moralized by applying Puritan-Protestant values in the United States. The moralization can be positive (e.g. lauding athletes who "work hard" in sports journalism) or negative (e.g. devaluing athletes who "coast on talent"). You can select any issue that is applicable (e.g. welfare, obesity, sports, education, etc.) so do not limit yourself in any way.

Specs: 1000 - 2000 words, 12pt Times New Roman Font, Double-spaced

Sunday - February 9, 2014

Class: Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Moral Diversity in American Culture  
9:30am - 10:45am · Lecture

Monday - February 10, 2014
Wednesday - February 12, 2014

Class: Application: Beyond the "Culture Wars"
9:30am - 10:45am · Lecture


Sunday - February 16, 2014

Assignment: Moral Worldviews and the Culture Wars:
Application Paper III (Option 1)
Due: February 16, 2014
Select a minimum of two issues related to the so-called culture wars. Using example of discourse related to these issues (e.g. opinion pieces, news stories) demonstrate how the debate is structured by distinct cultural worldviews, using the Shweder/Jensen typology of Community, Authority, and Divinity as your guiding framework. How does this exercise help us understand the fundamental axis of conflict in a better way? How can it help move the different sides towards a more constructive dialogue?

Specs: Minimum 1500 words, 12pt Times New Roman Font, Double-spaced

Assignment: Habits of the Heart: Application Paper III
(Option 2)
Due: February 16, 2014
A key claim made by Bellah et al (1985) and that American culture is has traditionally been caught in trying to resolve the tensions and contradictions between Biblical and Republican traditions that emphasize collective moral responsibility, attachment to communally imposed moral values and civic engagement and the more individualist (utilitarian and expressive) traditions that emphasize self-interest, the pursuit of individual happiness and concern for the self.

For this paper, I want you watch Obama's second (2013) inaugural address* with an eye towards identifying (1) how these various traditions show up in Obama's speech (the key terms, words and phrases through Obama evokes the individualist, Republican, and Biblical traditions) and (2) The particular ways in which Obama attempts to reconcile the tensions inherent in these traditions. What is Obama's main emphasis (e.g. individualist, Republican or Biblical)? What traditions does Obama see as more important? Which tradition does he consider valuable, but at the same time in need of being reigned in by other traditions?

Specs: Minimum 1500 words, 12pt Times New Roman Font, Double-spaced
Monday - February 17, 2014

Class: Two ways of being yourself
9:30am - 10:45am · Lecture


Wednesday - February 19, 2014

Class: Application I: Social Class, Culture, and the Self
9:30am - 10:45am · Lecture


Monday - February 24, 2014

Class: Application II: Ethnicity, Race, and Gender
9:30am - 10:45am · Lecture
Markus, H. R., & Conner, A. (2013). Clash!: 8 cultural conflicts that make us who we are. Penguin (Chaps. 2) (Felicia)

Markus, H. R., & Conner, A. (2013). Clash!: 8 cultural conflicts that make us who we are. Penguin (Chaps. 3) (Andrea)

Markus, H. R., & Conner, A. (2013). Clash!: 8 cultural conflicts that make us who we are. Penguin (Chaps. 4) (Ha Young)

Tuesday - February 25, 2014

Assignment: Culture and the Self (Application Paper IV)
Due: February 25, 2014
Summarize Markus and Kitayama’s theory of how different cultural constructions of the self result in distinct psychological predispositions towards emotion, thinking, and personal relationships. How are culture and the self connected in a "cycle"? Provide at least two concrete examples of how independent and interdependent self-construals help us to explain group differences on attitudes, behaviors, and important life outcomes.

Specs: 1500 words minimum, 12pt Times New Roman Font, Double-spaced.
Wednesday - February 26, 2014

Class: Violence, Cultures of Honor, and American Regional Cultures
9:30am - 10:45am · Lecture


Monday - March 3, 2014

Class: Foundations of Moral Diversity
9:30am - 10:45am · Lecture


Tuesday - March 4, 2014

Assignment: Culture of Honor (Application Paper V)
Due: March 4, 2014
In this paper, I want you to first summarize and then apply the Culture of Honor thesis of Cohen, Nisbet, and collaborators to a real life empirical case (or a number of cases) taken from news media sources.

Ideally the case should provide a good example of all of the facets of the culture of honor culture cycle, including the influence of regional culture, the role played by socialization, and linkages to institutions as they pertain to conceptions of appropriate use of violence, notions of masculinity and so on.

Specs: minimum 1500 words, 12pt times new Roman font, double spaced.

Wednesday - March 5, 2014

Class: Application: Beyond Conservative and Liberals
9:30am - 10:45am · Lecture


Sunday - March 16, 2014

Assignment: Final paper topic proposal due
Due: March 16, 2014
This is a short 500-1000 words proposal which outlines the topic that will be the focus of your final paper. Topic choice is open-ended and up to you. You can propose to write about a topic that we have or will cover in class or a topic of your choice, with the only constraint that it is a topic that indeed looks at an issue related to morality.

Specs: double-spaced, 12pt Times New Roman font.

Monday - March 17, 2014

Class: Disgust, the Body and Morality
9:30am - 10:45am · Lecture


Tuesday - March 18, 2014

Assignment: Moral Foundations Theory Application Paper VI
Due: March 18, 2014
Moral Foundations Theory (MFT) argues that morally charged debates surrounding every major political issue in the U.S. (and every other country) today, including the so-called "culture wars," is fueled by the fact that persons on different side of a given issue generate moral judgments according to different foundations. What appears like a morally justified position from one side, may appear like a gross distortion of morality from other.

To (productively) deal with this issue, MFT theorists suggest that rather than thinking that your stance is the moral one and that of your opponent is driven by fundamentally immoral motivations, a better step towards dialogue across the moral divide is to actually step back and ascertain which foundations of morality are being used to form a judgment on an issue (and which ones are not). Odds are that the conflict can be resolved not by the fact that your opponent is using fundamentally non-moral reasoning, but because he/she relying on a moral foundation that you either may not recognize, find meaningless, or at least not important enough to override your preferred foundation(s).

In this paper, I want you to pick a "hot button" issue (preferably one that produces a clear alignment along the conservative-liberal divide and deconstruct the two opposing positions according to MFT. For each side, I want to specify the Moral Foundation(s) that are used to generate the particular moral stance on each side. Be sure to note what the source of the conflict is (one side puts more weight on a given foundation than the other, or uses a different set of foundations than the other). Finally, I want you to go to the YourMorals.org website and take the Moral Foundations Questionnaire (http://www.yourmorals.org/explore.php) this will give you a sense of the extent to
which you rely on a given foundation or not the other. Use the results of this test to reflect on how your own stance on the issue that you selected corresponds (or fails to correspond) to that which would be predicted by MFT.

Specs: Minimum 1500 words, 12pt Times New Roman Font, Double-spaced.

Wednesday - March 19, 2014

Class: Application I: The role of disgust in moral judgment
9:30am - 10:45am · Lecture


Monday - March 24, 2014

Class: Application II: Dynamics of moralization
9:30am - 10:45am · Lecture


Tuesday - March 25, 2014

Assignment: Disgust and Morality Application Paper
Due: March 25, 2014
A key claim of the readings for this week is that emotion of disgust, which initially evolved as a "food/contamination protection system" subsequently became recruited as a "moral emotion," playing a role in (a) supporting boundary making in relation to outgroups, (b) supporting the moralization of various ritual and religious practices associated with bodily purity, (c) used in the condemnation of various sexual practices, the ingestion of certain substances and even the deeming of the ingestion of certain foods as immoral (e.g. prohibition against eating pork in certain religions).
In this paper, I want you to select a set of moral issues (or recent news events associated with moral impropriety) and examine the role that discourses associated with "disgust" (e.g., literally calling certain behaviors and beliefs "disgusting") play in the relevant moral debates. You can use any source you want, but usually either speeches or news articles are ideal. (A good sampling can be found in this custom created Google News section [news.google.com/news/section?pz=1&cf=all&ned=us&hl=en&csid=5243925cecf565b&redirect=true]). Make sure to specify clearly how discourses associated with "disgust" and how the labelling of certain beliefs, behaviors or persons as "disgusting" is doing moral work here. When appropriate you should refer back to the readings noting when your findings support the Rozin/Haidt theory and when they challenge it. Does your score on "disgust scale" ([http://www.yourmorals.org/disgust_process.php](http://www.yourmorals.org/disgust_process.php)) shed any light on your own stance towards these issues?

Wednesday - March 26, 2014

Class: Religion and Morality
9:30am - 10:45am · Lecture

Markus, H. R., & Conner, A. (2013). Clash!: 8 cultural conflicts that make us who we are. Penguin (Chaps. 7)

Monday - March 31, 2014

Class: Regional cultures, regional moralities
9:30am - 10:45am · Lecture

Markus, H. R., & Conner, A. (2013). Clash!: 8 cultural conflicts that make us who we are. Penguin (Chaps. 6) (Andrea)

Markus, H. R., & Conner, A. (2013). Clash!: 8 cultural conflicts that make us who we are. Penguin (Chaps. 9) (Il-Jee)

Tuesday - April 1, 2014

Assignment: Moralization (Application Paper VIII)
Due: April 1, 2014
Select an issue, behavior or social practice that has either been moralized (or de-moralized) over-time. The readings (and class) examples included cigarette smoking, vegetarianism, homosexuality, and marijuana use. You may use any of these examples, but it would be better if you can come up with your own original example. Discuss the specific ways in which the particular practice and behavior went from being a preference to being considered a morally binding value (or vice versa). Make sure to outline the mechanisms that account for the historical change in its moral status. These must include at least five of the following:

a) Government action (prohibition, regulation, censure)
b) Institutional action (schools, churches, etc.)
c) Scientific endorsement
d) Individual moral censure
e) Incorporation into self-identity
f) Internalization
g) Parent-to-child transmission
h) Connection to purity and disgust
Wednesday - April 2, 2014

Class: Emotion and Morality
9:30am - 10:45am · Lecture


Sunday - April 6, 2014

Assignment: Draft Introduction and bibliography due
Due: April 6, 2014
Your draft introduction should at a minimum include:

1) A statement of your main question or problem (what is it, why it is important).

2) A summary of a possible answer suggested by some of the readings that we have done so far.

3) At the very least, an outline of the main body of the paper, with a preview of the main argument and conclusions.

Your bibliography should include at least five (5) outside sources (material that we have not covered in class) that deal with that question in addition to the in-class material.

Specs: Minimum 1500 words, double-spaced, 12pt Times New Roman font.

Monday - April 7, 2014

Class: The Role of Metaphors in Moral Reasoning I
9:30am - 10:45am · Lecture
Lakoff, G. (1994). Metaphor, Morality, and Politics, Or, Why Conservatives Have Left Liberals In the Dust. The workings of language: From prescriptions to perspectives, 139-56. (Markisha)


Wednesday - April 9, 2014
Class: The Role of Metaphors in Moral Reasoning II: 
Dirt and Cleanliness  
9:30am - 10:45am · Lecture  


Monday - April 14, 2014  
Class: Class cancelled (conference travel)  
9:30am - 10:45am · Lecture  

Tuesday - April 15, 2014  
Assignment: Moral Emotions Application Paper  
Due: April 15, 2014  
A key claim of the "moral emotions" thesis is that the three major emotions associated with moral judgments and moral actions (contempt, anger, and disgust) have an elective affinity with the three major moral worldviews (Community, Autonomy, and Divinity). The basic claims is that violations of the logic of community (e.g. disrespect for superiors) is likely to lead to contempt, violations of autonomy (being unfair or not supporting equal rights for persons) lead to anger, and violations of divinity or purity concern are likely to lead to disgust. In this paper, I want you to provide one example (taken from real life) that supports this linkage as well as one counter-example that seems to violate the CAD triad hypothesis (e.g. a violation of purity that leads to anger or a violation of autonomy that leads to disgust). How would a CAD theorist handle the counter-example?  

Specs: Minimum 1500 words, 12pt Times New Roman Font, Double-spaced  

Wednesday - April 16, 2014  
Class: Putting it all together, culture, the self, intuitions, and moral diversity  
9:30am - 10:45am · Lecture  
Reading: TBA  

Tuesday - April 22, 2014  
Assignment: Metaphors and Morality Application Paper  
Due: April 22, 2014  
We have seen that the metaphor of "dirt" is used to refer to a generalized perception that a given person, thing or entity is "out of place," thus threatening the coherence of the established (moral) order. The perception of something being out of place in its turn leads to morally tinged (usually collective) reactions to reestablish moral order by either putting the offending entity "back in its place" or expelling it from the system. Things that don't fit in their place (because they violate categorical boundaries) are as a rule seen as dangerous, threatening and "polluting" (you can become like them if you get near).
In this assignment I want you apply this insight to some historical or contemporary episode of "moral panic" and "moral entrepreneurship" using news stories, magazines or other secondary material. A moral panic consists in the sudden identification that there is some set of persons or entities that (by their very presence) threaten moral order (and thus constitute dirt). This may include as we have seen, AIDS victims, immigrants, pedophiles, and so on. Moral entrepreneurship consists in a collective effort to restore moral order via the two mechanisms mentioned above (putting people back in their place, expelling them or erasing them symbolically). Examples of this process may include the presence of noxious or undesirable categories of persons, or types of things that threaten to "pollute" (usually the young) such as mass media messages, images or video games. Other examples include the emergence of certain styles and practices that (because they violate the sanctity of established categories) are seen as dangerous and threatening.

Make sure in your example to note how discourses of danger, pollution, defilement, contagion, and harm are explicitly used. In addition make sure to note specifically why your example counts as one of "dirt" in Douglas' sense (e.g. by noting why it does not fit in established social or cultural categories).

Specs: 1500 words, 12pt Times New Roman Font, Double-spaced

Wednesday - April 23, 2014

Class: Class cancelled (conference travel)
9:30am - 10:45am · Lecture

Sunday - April 27, 2014

Assignment: Draft final paper due
Due: April 27, 2014
This a preliminary full draft of the final paper. It must contain at a minimum four major sections, indicated by Headings, with (optional) sub-headings within. These sections are:

1) Introduction: this is where you outline the topic of your paper, summarize what the problem or puzzle that you will tackle is, and why it is important.

2) Literature Review: This is where you summarize how your topic or problem has been treated in the previous literature, what answers or formulations have been offered by others, and where you evaluate how these answers contribute to our understanding of the topic and how they fall short.

3) Discussion: This is where you introduce your own approach to the problem or puzzle. You introduce your main argument, how it compares to other arguments, and how you would answer criticisms brought up by people coming from a different perspective.

4) Conclusion: This is where you recapitulate in summary form the major argument of your paper and summarize your main conclusion. Here you also let the reader know what is the main lesson to take away from your paper and how you have advanced over previous views on the subject. You may also outline limitations and scope of the argument and what questions or issues remain to be dealt with in future research on the topic.

Specs: Minimum 3500 words, double-spaced, Times New Roman font.

Monday - April 28, 2014
Class: Student Presentations I  
9:30am - 10:45am · Lecture

Wednesday - April 30, 2014

Class: Student Presentations II  
9:30am - 10:45am · Lecture

There are currently no upcoming events.