

USU 1340 Social Systems and Issues Or Society and the Individual

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Introduction to the Course:

The course combines the ideas of anthropology, biology, sociology, economics, political science, and psychology in an attempt to answer three primary questions:

1. What drives human nature?
2. What encourages cooperation?
3. What is the influence of individuals on society?

This class will provide you with challenging readings. Some of the readings will be hard because the writing is dense and requires careful reading. Some of the readings will be hard because they directly contradict your previously held beliefs. This is good! You will become better readers and thinkers, you will be stretched to defend your opinions, and you will have the opportunity to do so both through your writing and through in class discussions.

Course Objectives:

1. Identify and understand the incentives that shape human behavior.
2. Examine and understand how social context impacts individual decisions and how individual decision making changes social outcomes both positively and negatively.
3. Improve your writing and critical thinking skills.

Readings:

You should purchase the following texts for this course:

The Origins of Virtue
Matt Ridley
Penguin Books
ISBN 978-0-14-026445-6

Other selected readings will be provided by the instructor online through Canvas.

Requirements:

This course is going to ask you to demonstrate your critical thinking and communication skills through concise writing and debating, and will encourage you to embrace careful study habits through lecture and reading quizzes.

You will be responsible for writing three short papers for this course. You will be able to select from any of the discussion topics of the week, each due on the day of the debate before class

starts on Canvas. Each paper will be no longer than TWO pages. It should be double spaced, 12 pt. font, with one inch margins. Each short paper will be worth fifty points.

You will be assigned eleven quizzes over the course of the semester which will cover both reading and lecture content. Ten of these will be part of your final grade. The lowest score will be discarded. Quizzes will all be on Canvas. Each quiz will be unlocked Wednesday afternoons, and will be due before class starts on Thursday. Quizzes will be timed—you will have only fifteen minutes to complete each quiz. Missed quizzes will receive a zero. Each quiz will be worth twenty-five points.

You will also be required to take a paper writing quiz. I will not grade your papers until you have passed this quiz with a perfect score, so you will need to retake the quiz until you get 100%. The paper writing quiz will be made available after the first week of class.

Approximately once per week, we will hold in-class debates on debate days, where attendance is graded, and your participation is strongly encouraged. On debate days, bonus points will be awarded to the winning side.

You will need to do the readings and attend lectures in order to successfully write your papers and participate in the debates.

Participation points will be awarded intermittently during class debates and can also be earned by participating in the online discussion on Canvas. Points for “What’s in the News?” can be earned by responding to the initial news story or for commenting on your peers’ comments. You must do both to earn the full five points for each “What’s in the News?” discussion.

Your final assignment will be a presentation on one of the most influential people in history. You will provide a brief biographical sketch of the individual and then present an argument that your selection is either a “Great Man” (or woman) or a “Zeitgeist.” I will explain this more fully later in the semester.

In sum:

Papers (3)	50 pts. each	150 pts.
Debates (10)	10 pts. each	100 pts.
Quizzes (10)	25 pts. each	250 pts.
Paper Writing Quiz	25 pts. each	25 pts.
Participation		25 pts.
Presentation		<u>50 pts</u>
		600 pts.

Grade Scale:

You can check your current grade at any time by dividing the points you have accumulated by the points possible. The resulting percentage can then be applied to the following scale:

A	94-100	B-	80-83	D+	67-69
A-	90-93	C+	77-79	D	64-67
B+	87-89	C	74-76	D-	60-63
B	84-86	C-	70-73	F	59

Due Dates:

Accompanying this syllabus is a course schedule with all of the assignment due dates. This means you know in advance if there is going to be a conflict with a wedding, family vacation, or some such other event. If that is the case you will be expected to turn in your writing assignments early. Late papers will lose five points for each day they are late. You will be able to drop two quizzes this semester, so there will be no make-ups or early quizzes given regardless of illness, weddings, family emergencies, or the like. I encourage you to plan accordingly.

Incomplete Policy:

Incompletes are given for medical or other serious reasons. Simply miscalculating the time needed to complete the course is not a sufficient reason for an incomplete. You must contact me EARLY in the semester if you think your circumstances warrant an incomplete grade. Pleas in the last week of class do not hold a lot of credibility.

Academic Honesty:

“Students have a responsibility to promote academic integrity at the University by not participating in or facilitating others’ participation in any act of academic dishonesty and by reporting all violations or suspected violations of the Academic Integrity Standard to their instructors.

Violations of the Academic Integrity Standard (academic violations) include, but are not limited to:

Cheating: (1) using or attempting to use or providing others with any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, examinations, or in any other academic exercise or activity, including working in a group when the instructor has designated that the quiz, test, examination, or any other academic exercise or activity be done “individually”; (2) depending on the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments; (3) substituting for another student, or permitting another student to substitute for oneself, in taking an examination or preparing academic work; (4) acquiring tests or other academic material belonging to a faculty member, staff member, or another student without express permission; (5) continuing to write after time has been called on a quiz, test, examination, or any other academic exercise or activity; (6) submitting substantially the same work for credit in more than one class, except with prior approval of the instructor; or (7) engaging in any form of research fraud.

Falsification: altering or fabricating any information or citation in an academic exercise or activity.

Plagiarism: representing, by paraphrase or direct quotation, the published or unpublished work of another person as one's own in any academic exercise or activity without full and clear acknowledgment. It also includes using materials prepared by another person or by an agency engaged in the sale of term papers or other academic materials."¹

More About Plagiarism: Do not plagiarize. Please. If you use the words or phrases of someone else they must be in quotations with a proper citation. If you use the ideas of someone else—even if you put them in your own words—you must still attribute the idea to them with proper citation. “Plagiarism is a very serious matter and, in some forms, is a violation of the law. Students have been expelled from the university for engaging in acts of plagiarism. The policy of the Political Science Department of USU in response to an initial act of plagiarism by a student is to give the students an ‘F’ grade for the assignment and record the act in the student’s departmental file. A second act of plagiarism in the same course will result in an ‘automatic’ receipt of ‘F’ grade for the course. Any subsequent acts of plagiarism in other courses will result in recommendations of expulsion.”² If you have any questions about what plagiarism is please come talk to me.

¹ “Academic Honesty/Integrity,” *USU General Catalog 2011-2012*, accessed February 27, 2015, <http://catalog.usu.edu/content.php?catoid=3&navoid=265>.

² Kristen Dawson, “USU 1320 Geography and Civilization,” (syllabus, Utah State University, 2012), 3.

Course Schedule

August	
<p>29 Introduction</p> <p><i>Ridley: Prologue</i></p>	<p>31 Social Sciences; Paper Writing and Plagiarism</p> <p>The Writing Quiz</p>
September	
<p>5 Competition; Case Study: The Ik</p> <p><i>Leviathan: Ch. 13-15, 17, 18 (Canvas); Turnbull: Ch. 7 (Canvas)</i></p>	<p>7 Competition, cont.;</p> <p>Discussion Topic: Do the Ik prove Hobbes' theory?</p> <p>Quiz # 1</p>
<p>12 Cooperation; Case Study: The Semai</p> <p><i>Rousseau Excerpts (Canvas); Ridley: p. 131-144</i></p>	<p>14 Cooperation, cont.;</p> <p>Discussion Topic: In his natural state, is man cooperative or competitive?</p> <p>Quiz # 2</p>
<p>19 From State of Nature to Society</p> <p><i>Fukuyama: Ch. 13 (Canvas); Ridley: p. 105-117</i></p>	<p>21 From State of Nature to Society, cont.;</p> <p>Discussion Topic: Does true free will exist?</p> <p>Quiz # 3 FIRST PAPER DEADLINE</p>
<p>26 Survival and the Sexual Drive</p> <p><i>Ridley: Ch. 1; Dawkins: Ch. 2, 4 (Canvas)</i></p>	<p>28 Survival and the Sexual Drive, cont.;</p> <p>Discussion Topic: Do humans cooperate because society encourages it, or because our genes do?</p> <p>Quiz # 4</p>

October	
<p>3 Culture and the Hutterites</p> <p><i>Geertz: Ch. 2 (Canvas)</i></p>	<p>5 Culture, cont.;</p> <p>Discussion Topic: Are there “some things that all men agree are right, real, just, or attractive?”</p> <p>Quiz # 5</p>
<p>10 Game Theory and Personal Culture</p> <p><i>Ridley: Ch. 3-4</i></p>	<p>12 Game Theory and Personal Culture, cont.;</p> <p>Personal Culture Presentations</p> <p>Quiz # 6</p>
<p>17 Game Theory and Personal Culture, cont.</p> <p><i>(No Readings)</i></p>	<p>19</p> <p>No Class - Fall Break</p>
<p>24 Case Studies: Elie Wiesel; Jedwabne</p> <p><i>Wiesel Excerpts (Canvas)</i></p>	<p>26 Reading Discussion</p> <p>Quiz # 7</p>
<p>31 Altruism and Sacrifice</p> <p><i>Hardin: “Does Altruism Exist?” (Canvas);</i> <i>Biggs: “Dying Without Killing” (Canvas);</i> <i>Ridley p. 37-40, 144-147</i></p>	
November	
	<p>2 Altruism and Sacrifice, cont.;</p> <p>Discussion Topic: Does pure altruism exist?</p> <p>Quiz # 8</p> <p>SECOND PAPER DEADLINE</p>

<p>7 Violence</p> <p><i>Pinker: Ch. 2 (Canvas)</i></p>	<p>9 Violence, cont.;</p> <p>Discussion Topic: Do you agree with Pinker's assertion that society is becoming less violent?</p> <p>Quiz # 9</p>
<p>14 Peace</p> <p><i>Pinker: Ch. 3 (Canvas)</i></p>	<p>16 Peace, cont.;</p> <p>Discussion Topic: Is world peace a sustainable objective?</p> <p>Quiz # 10</p>
<p>21 Great Man or Zeitgeist?</p> <p><i>TIME: "Inventor of the Future" (Canvas);</i> <i>STRATFOR: "Principle, Rigor, and Execution (Canvas)</i></p>	<p>23</p> <p>No Class - Thanksgiving</p>
<p>28 Religion</p> <p><i>Religion Readings (Canvas)</i></p>	<p>30 Religion, cont.;</p> <p>Discussion Topic: Does modern society need religion?</p> <p>Quiz # 11 THIRD PAPER DEADLINE</p>
<p>December</p>	
<p>5 Presentations</p>	<p>7 Presentations</p>

Plain Text = Discussion/Lecture Material

Italicized Text = Reading Assignment

Bolded Text = Due dates and other important dates.

*I reserve all rights to change the course schedule.