

Political Science 210
Stanford University
Winter Quarter, 2002

Political Culture

David Laitin, Instructor
Barry Weingast, Collaborator

Purposes of the Course: This course is designed to give students a basic overview of the traditional approaches to the study of culture in the social sciences as a background to the introduction of an “equilibrium” approach to culture as has been developed in the past few years in political science and economics. The equilibrium approach seeks to account for the influence of culture on economic and political behavior, yet seeks as well to account for shifts in culture. It should also show the different role of culture in institutional life in preindustrial and modern societies. The course will assess the pay-off for this approach, in examining whether it can shed new light on old questions such as the sources of democracy, inter-group violence, nationalism, and economic growth.

Requirements of the Course: Students will be expected to read broadly for each week’s readings, and to participate in seminar discussions of the readings. But the principal requirement of the course is the research for and writing of a seminar paper that develops or critiques some aspect of the equilibrium approach to culture. The paper will be due on Friday of the examination week.

Week 1: Overview of the Course

David Laitin and Barry Weingast “An Equilibrium Approach to Culture and Cultural Change” [A draft version of this paper will be posted on the class website. For the opening session, the instructor will summarize the paper. Students can refer to it later in the course for reference purposes.]

Part I: What is Culture?

Week 2: Traditional Approaches to Culture

A. Cultural Anthropology

Ruth Benedict The Chrysanthemum and the Sword, chaps. 1-3, 12

Clifford Geertz “Thick Description” and “Deep Play”, both in his

Interpretation of Culture

B. Social Anthropology

E.E. Evans-Pritchard The Nuer, Introduction, chaps. 1, 4-5

C. Post-Modern Critique of the Culture Concept

1. Bonnell, Victoria and Lynn Hunt (1999) "Introduction" in Victoria Bonnell and Lynn Hunt eds. Beyond the Cultural Turn (Berkeley: University of California Press)

D. Political Culture" in the Behavioral Tradition

Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, The Civic Culture chaps. 1, 6, 12-13

Aaron Wildavsky, Presidential Address in APSR, "Choosing Preferences by Constructing Institutions: A Cultural Theory of Preference Formation" APSR, 81(1): March, 1987, pp. 3-22.

David Laitin and Aaron Wildavsky "Political-Culture And Political Preferences" American Political Science Review , V. 82(#2) Pp. 589-596 Jun 1988

Ronald Inglehart Culture Shift

E. Sociology

Pierre Bourdieu Outline of a Theory of Practice

Christopher Ansell (1997) "Symbolic Networks: The Realignment of the French Working Class, 1887-1894." American Journal of Sociology 103, 2: 359-90

Week 3: A New Equilibrium Approach to Culture and Identity

A. Culture

Robert Sugden, "Spontaneous Order" in Mark Casson (ed.), Culture, Social Norms and Economics vol. 2, 90-102.

Michael Chwe Rational Ritual

B. Identity

GA Akerlof and RE Kranton (2000) "Economics and Identity" Quarterly Journal of Economics, 115 (3): 715-53.

James D. Fearon "What is Identity (As We Now Use the Word)?
Unpublished manuscript

Part II: Cultural Dynamics

Week 4: Mechanisms of Cultural Production

Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger, introductory essay in The Invention of Tradition

Thomas Schelling A Strategy of Conflict, chap. 3

Jon Elster Cement of Society

Robert Axelrod "Disseminating Culture" Journal of Conflict Resolution (1997), pp. 203-26

Robert Boyd and Peter Richerson Culture and the Evolutionary Process chaps. 1, 3.

Robert Bates “Modernization, Ethnic Competition, and the Rationality of Politics in Contemporary Africa” in Rothchild and Olorunsola State vs. Ethnic Claims

Week 5: Mechanisms of Cultural Enforcement

Robert Ellickson Order Without Law

Richard Fenno Power of the Purse, chap. 2

David Laitin “Marginality: A Micro Perspective” in Rationality and Society January 1995, pp. 31-57.

Mathew McCubbins and Thomas Schwartz (1984) “Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols vs. Fire Alarms”

Douglas Heckathorn “Collective Action and the Second-Order Free-Rider Problem” in Rationality & Society 1,1: 1989, pp. 78-100

Week 6: Mechanisms of Cultural Shift

David Laitin Identity in Formation, chap. 1

Timur Kuran Private Truths, Public Lies

Gerald Mackie “Ending footbinding and infibulation: a convention account” ASR 61, 6 (1996)

Avner Greif and David Laitin, “How Do Self-Enforcing Institutions Endogenously Change?: Institutional Reinforcement and Quasi-Parameters” (draft manuscript)

Part III: Problems to be Solved

Week 7: Cultures in Conflict

Samuel Huntington Clash of Civilizations

Donald Horowitz The Deadly Ethnic Riot

Paul Brass “Theft of an Idol” in Theft of an Idol

James Fearon and David Laitin “Explaining Ethnic Cooperation” in APSR 1996

Barry Weingast “Political Stability and Civil War” in Bates et al Analytic Narratives

Russell Hardin All For One

Week 8: Democracy

Robert Putnam Making Democracy Work

Brian Barry Sociologists, Economists and Democracy

Adam Przeworski Democracy and the Market (chap. 1)

Barry Weingast “Political Foundations of Democracy and the Rule of Law” in 1997 APSR

Week 9: Nationalism

Ernest Gellner Thought and Change chap. 7

Benedict Anderson Imagined Communities

Eugen Weber Peasants into Frenchmen

Michael Hechter Containing Nationalism

Week 10: Economic Growth and the Rise of the West

Max Weber The Protestant Ethic and the Capitalist Spirit

Avner Greif “Cultural Beliefs and the Organization of Society” Journal of Political Economy 1994

Paul Milgrom, Douglass North, and Barry Weingast “The Role of Institutions in the Revival of Trade: The Law Merchant, Private Judges and the Champagne Fairs” Economics and Politics 2, 1: March 1990, pp. 1-23.

David Kreps “On Corporate Culture” in James Alt and Kenneth Shepsle Perspectives on Positive Political Economy pp. 90-143

William Easterly and Ross Levine “Africa’s Growth Tragedy” QJE, November 1997

Edward Miguel “Ethnic Diversity and School Funding in Kenya”
<http://econwpa.wustl.edu:8089/eps/hew/papers/0012/0012001.pdf>