

**Social Dilemmas**  
Carnegie Mellon University  
Spring 2009

**Instructor:**

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Everywhere we find circumstances where individual short-term self interest and social goals conflict. Everyone in India would be better off if everyone had fewer children, but each individual has an incentive to have more. We would all be better off if everyone would take public transportation, but every individual has an incentive to drive.

These social dilemmas represent a large number of social problems in almost every culture, and they have been subjective to extensive theoretical and laboratory investigation. Much of this study has focused on how to “solve” these problems, that is how to elicit cooperative from people in these dilemmas. This course will focus on both of these studies and will attempt to apply them to actual human problems.

Students will be required to create a final presentation which presents an actual social problem that fits this type. If the problem is ongoing (not solved) you will need to suggest a few potential solution and why you think they might be successful. If the problem has been solved, you will need to show how it was solved. The presentation will be built up over a series of informal group presentations, and the quality of your work will be evaluated by your peers.

<b>Required Text:</b>	Robert Axelrod (1984) <i>The Evolution of Cooperation</i> Basic Books
<b>Grade break down</b>	Two group presentations to other students (15% each) One class presentation (30%) Participation in group and class presentations (10% each) Participation in class outside of presentations (10%)

## Class Schedule

January 13	Introduction to social dilemmas
January 15	No class
January 20	No class
January 22	Cooperation and the prisoner's dilemma (Axelrod Chapter 1 )
January 27	Tit for Tat and tournaments (Axelrod Chapter 2 and 3)
January 29	Live and let live (Axelrod Chapter 4)
February 3	Biology and altruism (Axelrod Chapters 5)
February 5	Strategies for cooperation (Axelrod Chapter 6 and 7)
February 10	Conclusions (Axelrod Chapter 8 and 9)
February 12	Tit for tat in people
February 17	Noisy prisoner's dilemmas and alternative strategies
February 19	Image scoring
February 24	Group presentations
February 26	Group presentations
March 3	Labels and bias
March 5	Endogenous punishment and second order free riding
March 10	No Class Spring Break
March 12	No Class Spring Break
March 17	Social norms
March 19	Group Selection
March 24	Group identification
March 26	Population structure and viscosity
March 31	Exit
April 2	Group presentations
April 7	Group presentations
April 9	No Class
April 14	Synthesis: Skyrms
April 16	Final Presentations
April 21	Final Presentations
April 23	Final Presentations
April 28	Final Presentations
April 30	Final Presentations