

Other Tutorial Topics

Here are some questions (some of which were taken from past exam papers) around which I built one-hour tutorials in the early years of teaching material that is covered in *Principles of Behavioral Economics*:

Can the basic ideas of behavioural economics help explain why behavioural economics has taken so long to be taken seriously, and why there is a division between the 'new' and 'old' variants of behavioural economics, and why, over a century after Veblen posed the question, is economics still not an evolutionary science?

What lessons does behavioural economics have for understanding how people choose their partners/spouses, the number of children they have and how to raise them, and how people choose when to terminate a relationship?

Discuss the implications of behavioural economics for understanding how people make their career choices, how the labour market works, and how people choose whether and how to vote.

A discussion of the following questions: (1) Critically evaluate the design of the Amazon.com website in the light of material so far covered in this subject; (2) Why does behavioural economics lead you to expect differences in the context of choice to result in difference between the ways that consumers reach decisions when (i) Shopping for weekly groceries, (ii) Renovating a bathroom or kitchen, (iii) Buying a rooftop solar photovoltaic system, (iv) Choosing motels at which to stay whilst touring around on a motoring holiday, (v) Buying their first mobile phone, and (vi) Purchasing legal services to obtain a property settlement with a former spouse.

Discuss the significance of behavioural economics for the design of consumer protection policies.

Examine the peculiarities of the movie and recorded music sectors and examine the extent to which behavioural/evolutionary economics can help us to understand the way these areas of business operate.

Consider how behavioural and evolutionary economics can help explain the changing relative fortunes of major firms in the car industry, with a focus on the histories of General Motors, Honda, Kia, and the Chinese automotive holding company Geely. Before the tutorial, you should examine the histories of these firms via their Wikipedia entries.

Discuss the case for analysing financial institutions from the standpoint of behavioural/evolutionary economics rather than in terms of mainstream approaches to choice, pricing and production.

If you had been hired as an economic consultant by the Christchurch City Council after this New Zealand city suffered its devastating earthquake in 2011, how would you have used insights from this course as a basis for offering advice on allocating resources to help the city achieve a rapid recovery? (This is a tutorial about the aftermath of a major shock that necessitated setting priorities in relation to the basic needs of the population and prerequisites

for economic recovery, and about areas where we might expect adaptability to be possible via the development of new routines, reimagining one's lifestyles/ways of thinking, and creative repurposing of assets [e.g., shipping containers], and scope for expecting altruistic behaviour to help towards spontaneous coordination to emerge from chaos. There are also mental health impacts to consider, and the extent to which residents may move elsewhere rather than staying, perhaps due to social embeddedness to rebuild despite ongoing aftershocks. Gerard Smyth's documentary film *When a City Falls*, which is readily available, e.g., via Amazon Prime, gives a great sense of the shock of this earthquake and its aftermath, though it was released before it became apparent how the city was adapting to live without its wrecked central business district, and how long the rebuilding process would take. The topic can work as a tutorial after Chapter 5's discussion of surprise and dread, enabling it also to use material from Chapters 2 and 3 in relation to motivation and the functioning of complex systems, while material from Chapter 4 could also be woven in regarding the cognitive challenges people initially have coping with shock on this kind of scale and why they can eventually adjust. There is also scope for emphasizing the need for procedural rationality and fast and frugal decision making in an emergency such as this, and to discuss whether long-term rebuilding could be greatly hindered by overlong attempts to resolve conflicting views about how a smashed city might be re-imagined.)