

# Public Health

## Bridwell Institute Advanced Reading Group Syllabus Spring 2024

**Attendance is required.** Your attendance and active participation are required. We will have 10 on-campus meetings. Students will be expected to attend all 10 on-campus meetings **plus one event during the semester for a total of eleven attendances**. Please note that this is a simple return to pre-COVID-19 rules for the reading group. Absences can be made up for by attending other Bridwell Institute events, some of which are listed below. **This will be enforced.** Failure to make all eleven attendances will result in no dispersal of stipend. Note that our schedule does not match up precisely with those of the other reading groups. **Note also that podcast episodes listed on the syllabus are required and are not optional unless stated otherwise.**

**Meeting Times.** Our on-campus meetings will be held on **Thursday** from 6pm-8pm in Expressway Tower in room 1090.

**Dinner.** After each session, we will bring in food to continue our conversation informally. You should expect this to last until about 8pm. This is considered an integral part of the program and you are expected to participate.

**Stipend.** Upon successful completion of the program, you will receive a \$1,000 stipend about a month after the program ends. (Thanks to the McLane Company, Inc. and the Armentrout Foundation for their generous support for this program.) There is much paperwork involved in order to process the payment. Taxes will not be withheld, but the payment will be reported to the IRS and you may be liable for paying taxes on that income. Please see Liz Chow (Crow 278) to make sure all the required paperwork is in order ([chow@smu.edu](mailto:chow@smu.edu), 214-768-2493). You can't get paid otherwise.

### General Advice

**Read Ahead.** There are about 50+ pages of material assigned each week, and the material is not always easy. Please budget enough time in your schedule to do the readings ahead of time.

**Come Prepared.** You should have 3 or 4 specific questions or comments prepared in advance for each session – hopefully related directly to the texts. Your active participation is expected and planning ahead is the best way to make sure you are contributing to the group discussion.

**Be Critical.** Don't agree unthinkingly with the readings or each other. Reasonable people disagree, so be reasonable.

**Be Humble.** The writers we read did not know everything and neither do you. Be willing to listen to the writers and each other, and be willing to say, "I don't know."

## BOOKS

Anne Case and Angus Deaton. 2020. *Deaths of Despair and the Future of Capitalism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Steven Johnson. 2021. *Extra Life: A Short History of Living Longer*. New York: Riverhead Books.

Jeffrey Miron. 2004. *Drug War Crimes: The Consequences of Prohibition*. Oakland: The Independent Institute.

Hans Rosling, Ola Rosling, and Anna Rosling Ronnlund. 2018. *Factfulness: Ten Reasons We're Wrong About the World – And Why Things Are Better Than You Think*. New York: Flatiron Books.

Jesse Singal. 2021. *The Quick Fix: Why Fad Psychology Can't Cure Our Social Ills*. New York: Picador.

1/25/24: Pandemics and Freedom

Troesken, Werner. 2015. *The Pox of Liberty: How the Constitution Left Americans Rich, Free, and Prone to Infection*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 68-102.

Koyama, Mark. 2023. "Epidemic Disease and the State: Is There a Tradeoff between Public Health and Liberty?" *Public Choice* 195: 145-167.

Furton, Glenn. 2023. "The Pox of Politics: Troesken's Tradeoff Reexamined." *Public Choice* 195: 169-191.

OPTIONAL Further Reading: Johnson ch. 2, p. 35-64.

2/1/24: Actual Long Run Trends in Global Health

Rosling et al. 2018, Introduction and ch. 1, 2, 6, & 9, p. 1-74, 144-165, & 204-222.

2/8/24: But Do We Want More Humans?

Driver, Jeremy. 2021. "Natalism for Progressives." *Works in Progress*, <https://worksinprogress.co/issue/natalism-for-progressives>

Ritchie, Hannah. 2024. "Climate Change: Turning Down the Thermostat." In *Not the End of the World: How We Can Be the First Generation to Build a Sustainable Planet*. New York: Little, Brown Spark, p. 64-111.

Tupy, Marian and Gale Pooley. 2022. "Thanos's Intellectual and Practical Progenitors" and "Julian Simon and the Bet that Made Him Famous." In *Superabundance: The Story of Population Growth, Innovation, and Human Flourishing on an Infinitely Bountiful Planet*. Washington, DC: Cato Institute, p. 47-87.

REQUIRED Podcast Episode, "Hannah Ritchie on Eating Local," <https://www.econtalk.org/hannah-ritchie-on-eating-local/>

2/15/24: Deaths of Despair

Case and Deaton 2020, ch. 2-3, 7-9, p. 28-46 and 83-130.

Yglesias, Matt. 2023. "The 'Deaths of Despair' Narrative is Wrong." *Slow Boring*, <https://www.slowboring.com/p/the-deaths-of-despair-narrative-is>

REQUIRED Podcast Episode: "Sam Quinones on Meth, Fentanyl, and the Least of Us." Available at: <https://www.econtalk.org/sam-quinones-on-meth-fentanyl-and-the-least-of-us/>

OPTIONAL FURTHER READING: Ruhm, Christopher. 2022. "Living and Dying in America: An Essay on *Deaths of Despair and the Future of Capitalism*." *Journal of Economic Literature* 60, no. 4: 1159-1187.

2/22/24: The War on Drugs

Miron 2004, p. 1-88.

Redford, Audrey. 2017. "Don't Eat the Brown Acid: Induced 'Malnovation' in Drug Markets." *Review of Austrian Economics* 30: 215-233.

Rich, Jacob James and Robert Capdilupo. 2023. "The Fight to Criminalize Opioid Prescribing." *Reason*, <https://reason.com/2023/02/10/the-fight-to-criminalize-opioid-prescribing/>

REQUIRED Podcast Episode: "Audrey Redford: Liberalism for All – The War on Drugs." Available at: <https://www.mercatus.org/hayekprogram/hayek-program-podcast/liberalism-all-war-drugs>

**OPTIONAL 2/24/24 Reading Group Summit, Dallas Hall, 1pm-2pm, Peter Jaworski on Markets without Limits**

**OPTIONAL 2/28/24 Texas Economic Forum, Topic TBD, Crum Auditorium, 6pm Reception and 7pm Lecture.**

2/29/24: The FDA

Johnson 2021, ch. 5, p. 123-146

Alexander, Scott. 2021. “Adumbrations of Aducanumab.” *Astral Codex Ten*,  
<https://astralcodexten.substack.com/p/adumbrations-of-aducanumab>

Thierer, Adam and Michael Wilt. 2016. “The Need for FDA Reform: Four Models.” Mercatus Policy Brief, <https://www.mercatus.org/research/policy-briefs/need-fda-reform-four-models>

Alexander, Scott. 2023. “Beyond ‘Abolish the FDA’.” *Astral Codex Ten*,  
<https://www.astralcodexten.com/p/beyond-abolish-the-fda>

REQUIRED Podcast Episode: “Steven Johnson: How We Doubled Life Expectancy in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.” Available at: <https://reason.com/podcast/2021/06/09/steven-johnson-how-we-doubled-life-expectancy-in-the-20th-century/>

3/7/24: Parenting

Emily Oster. 2013. *Expecting Better: Why the Conventional Wisdom is Wrong – and What You Really Need to Know*. New York: Penguin, p. xi-xxii.

Emily Oster. 2019. *Cribsheet: A Data-Driven Guide to Better, More Relaxed Parenting, from Birth to Preschool*. New York: Penguin, p. xiii-xxv.

Emily Oster. 2021. *The Family Firm: A Data-Driven Guide to Better Decision Making in the Early School Years*. New York: Penguin, p. 1-18.

Bryan Caplan. 2011. *Selfish Reasons to Have More Kids: Why Being a Great Parent is Less Work and More Fun Than You Think*. New York: Basic books, p. 1-12.

REQUIRED Podcast Episode: “Emily Oster on Pregnancy, Causation, and Expecting Better.” Available at: <https://www.econtalk.org/oster-on-pregnancy-causation-and-expecting-better/>

**3/14/24: No Reading Group – Spring Break**

**3/21/24: No Reading Group. Instead:**

**OPTIONAL Bridwell Institute Flouring and a Free Society, “Women & Economic Freedom: What does the Research Say?” Meg Tuszynski, moderator. Marth Proctor Grand Ballroom, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Umphrey Lee, SMU, 6pm Reception and 7pm Lecture.**

**3/28/24: No Reading Group**

4/4/24: Fad Psychology

Singal 2021, ch. 1, 3, 4, & 7, p. 11-38, 75-136, & 211-248

REQUIRED Podcast Episode: “Jesse Singal: Why We Keep Falling for Psychological Quick Fixes.” Available at: <https://reason.com/podcast/2021/04/14/jesse-singal-why-we-keep-falling-for-psychological-quick-fixes/>

4/11/24: Safety Regulation

Johnson 2021, ch. 7, p. 169-194.

Peltzman, Sam. 1975. “The Effects of Automobile Safety Regulation.” *Journal of Political Economy* 83, no. 4: 677-726. [*you can skim parts you find excessively technical or math-y*]

Peltzman, Sam. 2010. “Regulation and the Natural Progress of Opulence.” *Economic Affairs* 30, no. 2: 33-39.

Peltzman Effects in Sports: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GEtHU2afJnU>

REQUIRED Podcast Episode: “Sam Peltzman on Regulation.” Available at: <https://www.econtalk.org/peltzman-on-regulation/>

**OPTIONAL 4/15/24 Bridwell Institute Flouring and a Free Society, “The Conservative Futurist: How to Create the Sci-Fi World We Were Promised,” featuring James Pethokoukis. Crum Auditorium, 6pm Reception, 7pm Lecture.**

4/18/24: Cost

Glaeser, Edward and David Cutler. 2021. “Why Did So Much Health-Care Spending Produce So Little Health?” In *Survival of the City*, p. 131-168.

Haseltine, William A. 2013. *Affordable Excellence: The Singapore Healthcare Story*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, p. 1-37, 64-82, <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/AffordableExcellencePDF.pdf>

Helland, Eric and Alexander Tabarrok. 2019. *Why Are the Prices So Damn High? Health, Education, and the Baumol Effect*. Arlington: Mercatus Center, p. 1-55, <https://www.mercatus.org/media/70001/download?attachment>

REQUIRED Podcast Episode: “Alex Tabarrok on ‘Why are the Prices So D\*mn High?’” Available at: <https://podcasts.apple.com/ie/podcast/rationally-speaking-236-alex-tabarrok-on-why-are-prices/id351953012?i=1000445105866>

OPTIONAL FURTHER READING: Dunn, Abe, Anne Hall, and Seidu Dauda. 2022. “Are Medical Care Prices Still Declining? A Re-Examination Based on Cost-Effectiveness.” *Econometrica* 90, no. 2: 859-886.