**Elective Course** 2019/20 Winter

**CDCR6064 -** How Minds Create Societies: An Evolutionary Psychology approach

Text: Pascal Boyer (2018): Minds Create Societies, Yale UP

**[2 credits to be elected for 1st yr students, 2 credits for 2nd and 3rd yr students]**

Course Syllabus

**How Minds Create Societies:**

**An Evolutionary Psychology approach**

Instructor:

Gyorgy Gergely, CEU Professor

Department of Cognitive Science

Central European University

2019/20 Winter

PhD Elective Course

(2 credits, for Grade),

Offered for Crosslisted with:

Philosophy, Sociology and Anthropology

Course e-learning site: <https://ceulearning.ceu.edu/>

Office hours: by appointment

**Course Description:**

Historically, explaining the nature of social and cultural institutions that humans form and live in has been long considered to be the natural and sole domain of the social sciences such as sociology, economics, history, or philosophy. It was widely believed that advances in the natural sciences such as genetics, evolutionary biology, or experimental psychology are largely irrelevant for accounting for supra-individual societal phenomena and should be restricted to the study of individual behaviour and sub-personal mechanisms and processes. Recently, this standard view has been changing and radically challenged by significant advances in evolutionary psychology, comparative and cross-cultural psychology, cognitive archeology, social and cognitive anthropology, behavioural economics, social cognitive neuroscience, and ‘naturalized’ approaches to philosophy of mind or moral philosophy. Pascal Boyer’s recent book on *How Minds Create Societies* provides an excellent and up-to-date overview of how recent empirical and theoretical advances in a variety of evolutionary based scientific disciplines are making significant new contributions toward a deeper understanding of the nature of human societies, social and cultural institutions, traditions, moral norms, religious beliefs, cumulative culture and its intergenerational transmission, etc. Through analyzing basic and long-debated examples of social phenomena, Boyer illustrates how these previously unrelated fields of scientific inquiry are now inducing profound changes in the standard conceptualization of the social sciences and argues that the fruitful integration of these muti-disciplinary approaches provide the basic building blocks for a a new and unified scientific theory of human social institutions.

**Learning Outcomes:**

At the end of the course, students should be able to assess how recent advances in evolutionary psychology and related disciplines provide new foundations for a deeper scientific understanding of the nature of human societies, social institutions, and uniquely human cultural traditions.

**Course Requirements:**

Participation in class discussion (20%) Leading a discussion (30%) End-of-term essay (50%), deadline for submission:

**Course Schedule:**

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| KNEZEVIC | ALEKSANDRA | Grade | MA in Philosophy - Dual |
| [Knezevic\_Aleksandra@student.ceu.edu](mailto:Knezevic_Aleksandra@student.ceu.edu)    ROSZKOWSKI | MAGDALENA | Grade | PhD in Cognitive Science - US |
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| [Deb\_Angarika@phd.ceu.edu](mailto:Deb_Angarika@phd.ceu.edu)    KUSIMOVA | TAMARA | Grade | PhD in Sociology and Social Anthropology - US |
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