JOHN W.E. CREMIN

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Position:

Postdoctoral Fellow at the Aix-Marseille School of Economics from September 2024

Education:

2024	Ph.D. Economics	Columbia University
2021	MPhil Economics	Columbia University
2020	M.A. Economics	Columbia University
2018	M.A. Economics	Cambridge University

Honors and Awards:

2015-2016, Dissertation Fellowship, Department of Economics, Columbia University
2025, The Louis-André Gérard-Varet Prize at the ASSET 2025 Conference, awarded for *Bot Got Your Tongue? Social Learning with Timidity and Noise*

Fields of Specialization:

Primary Field: Microeconomic Theory (especially Social Learning)
Secondary Field: The Economics of Networks

Working Paper: Too Much Information & The Death of Consensus

Abstract: Modern society is increasingly polarized, even on purely factual questions, despite greater access to information than ever. In a model of sequential social learning, I study the impact of motivated reasoning on information aggregation. This is a belief formation process in which agents trade-off accuracy against ideological convenience. I find that even Bayesian agents only learn in very highly connected networks, where agents have arbitrarily large neighbourhoods asymptotically. This is driven by the fact that motivated agents sometimes reject information that can be inferred from their neighbours' actions when it refutes their desired beliefs. Observing any finite neighbourhood, there is always some probability that all of an agent's neighbours will have disregarded information thus. Moreover, I establish that consensus, where all agents eventually choose the same action, is only possible with relatively uninformative private signals and low levels of motivated reasoning.

Working Paper: Bot Got Your Tongue? Social Learning with Timidity and Noise

Abstract: Models of social learning conventionally assume that all actions are visible, whereas frequently we can choose whether or not to advertise our choices. In this paper I study a model of sequential social learning in which agents choose whether or not to let successors see their action, and only want to do so if they are sufficiently confident in their choice. I find that when this is combined with a non-zero fraction of noise agents and neighbourhoods of bounded size, it provokes a form of unravelling in which noise agents crowd out more and more informed agents. In the context of social media, this can help explain the disproportionate presence of bots and partisans, who crowd out regular users. Beyond this, I find that the combination of timidity and noise causes a complete breakdown in the *improvement principles* on which much of this literature depend, though they can be salvaged (or partially salvaged) when faced with only one of these features.

Working Paper: *TLDNR: Inattentive Learning on the* Internet*:*

Observing the views of others takes time and effort, yet in social learning it is typically assumed that we observe all those to whom we are connected for free. I investigate a model in which agents are rationally inattentive: they pay a certain cognitive cost to acquire private information, but must also pay to observe those to whom they are connected. In social networks where the cost of observation is decreasing in the strength of a given connection, I investigate the network and information conditions required for complete learning. I also analyze whether increasing or decreasing the connectivity of the network increases or decreases asymptotic accuracy, and under what circumstances.

Works in Progress:

Sleeping Beauty Behind the Wheel

Confronted with multiple action-optimal probabilities in the absentminded driver paradox, how should an agent act? Whereas the standard answer is to assume the different agent-parts can magically coordinate, in this paper I investigate the behaviour of ambiguity averse agents of various forms who consider all such probabilities plausible. Considering one procedure for a single absentminded agent, and another for multiple agents with indexical uncertainty, I then study two games with many action-optimal equilibria: Sleeping Beauty Behind the Wheel and Sleeping Beauty Goes Viral, which illustrate the application of these solution concepts to learning problems with indexical uncertainty. Finally, I consider the differences in beliefs implied by the *halfer* and *thirder* solutions to the Sleeping Beauty Problem.

Sleeping Beauty Drives to School

In a model of sequential social learning with finitely many agents, whenever the visibility of actions depends upon the state of the world, agents should update their beliefs simply upon learning how many agents have acted before them. In a sequential model where they are uncertain about the total population size, and receive only limited information about how many predecessors have arrived and acted before them, I study how agents should form beliefs in

response to such indexical information, and how this relates to the Sleeping Beauty Paradox. With endogenous visibility, we also encounter the absentminded driver paradox, as considered in *Sleeping Beauty Behind the Wheel* (see above).

Network Formation, Belief Consonance & Latte-drinking Liberals (with Evan Sadler):

That ideological beliefs and lifestyle choices go hand in hand is well established empirically, but lacking theoretical explanation. Considering agents with a preference for belief and lifestyle consonance, we investigate under what circumstances ideological polarization produces a belief-lifestyle affinity in stochastically stable networks.

Research and Work Experience:

Research Assistant for Evan Sadler Academic Year 2022-23
Research Assistant for Navin Kartik Spring 2021
Research Assistant for Andrew Kosenko Fall 2021

I have acted as a Referee for the Journal of Economic Theory.

Teaching Experience:

I have worked as a Teaching Fellow for the following classes:

Fall 2019: Introduction to Econometrics UN3412, Professor Jushan Bai
Spring 2020: Introduction to Econometrics UN3412, Professor Thomas Piskula
Fall 2020: Principles of Economics UN1105, Professor Sunil Gulati
Spring 2021: Market Design GU4260, Professor Guillaume Haeringer
Fall 2021: Market Design GU4260, Professor Guillaume Haeringer
Spring 2022: Behavioral Economics GU4840, Professor Mark Dean

Teaching Evaluations are available upon request.

Conference Presentations:

ADRES (l'Association pour le développement de la recherche en économie et en statistiques.)
Jan 22nd 2026 (Future) in Paris, France
Will Present *Bot Got Your Tongue*

ASSET (Association of Southern European Economic Theorists)
Nov 1st 2025 in Rabat, Morocco
Presented *Bot Got Your Tongue* and received the LAGV Prize

SAET (Society for the Advancement of Economic Theory)
July 1st 2025 in Ischia, Italy
Presented *Too Much Information & the Death of Consensus*

CTN (Coalition Theory Network)
May 22nd 2025 in Paris, France
Presented *Bot Got Your Tongue*

AMSE Newcomer's Day
October 10nd 2024 in Marseille, France
Presented *Bot Got Your Tongue*

EAYE (European Association of Young Economists)
May 24th 2024 in Paris, France
Presented *Bot Got Your Tongue*

Kansas Workshop in Economic Theory
May 3rd 2024 in Lawrence, Kansas
Presented *Too Much Information & the Death of Consensus*

SMYE (September Meeting of Young Economists – Now EAYE)
September 7th in Turin, Italy
Presented *Too Much Information & the Death of Consensus*

Languages:

English (Native), French (Advanced)

References:

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