

Prudence & Commitment Problems

Instructions

When doing the reading for this class, there are the two basic kinds of information you need to understand:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What are the reasons, important considerations, and evidence that lead the author to accept that conclusion?

It is information of the second sort that will be our primary concern, since our most basic task is to evaluate the reasons and evidence that are offered to support accepting one possible position on an issue, rather than another.

Reading

Frank, R. H. (1996). Evolutionary models of one-shot co-operation. In D. M. Messick & A. E. Tenbrunsel (Eds.), *Codes of conduct: Behavioral research into business ethics* (pp. 88–91). Russell Sage Foundation.

Questions

1. What does Robert Frank mean by a “commitment problem” and the “prisoner’s dilemma”?
(Hint: These two concepts have some overlap.)
2. According to Frank, how may a commitment problem be solved?

To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses. You do, however, need to be prepared to speak intelligently about these issues at our next class meeting.