

### Idiotfest 2011

Class 9, on Thursday, September 22, will be the debut of Idiotfest. We are going to look briefly at a sample of human biases and cognitive failures.

To accommodate a quick study of a wide range of human cognitive deficits, we are going to read two articles: Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman's "Judgment Under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases" and Sam McNerney's "Shifting Paradigms." The former is a classic presentation of human irrationality by the two psychologists fundamentally responsible for all recent rationality research. The latter is an independent-study project written last year by a Hamilton student.

These two papers are, together, too much for us each to read completely for one class. So each seminar participant will be responsible for a different section of one of the papers. Here are the available sections and topics:

Article	Topic	Presenter
Tversky and Kahneman	Representativeness, 1124-1127	
Tversky and Kahneman	Availability, 1127-1128	
Tversky and Kahneman	Adjustment and Anchoring, 1128-1130	
McNerney	Cognitive Biases, 12-19	
McNerney	Emotion and Reason, 19-27	
McNerney	Intuitions, 27-39	
McNerney	Positive Psychology, 39-50	
McNerney	Mistakes We Make, 50-57	

In class, we will have less than ten minutes to discuss each topic. I do not expect to cover each one in depth. Pick an interesting result or two to present and do it clearly and concisely. You are also welcome to introduce other human cognitive failings into the discussion. My intent is for us to get a broad view of human intellectual shortcomings.

A last caveat: I intend our interest in human shortcomings to be general rather than particular. There are lots of sad and amusing examples (e.g. [Jackass](#), the [Darwin Awards](#)) of individual idiocies. I don't intend to focus on these, though we might mention some of them.