

OSTROM WORKSHOP COLLOQUIUM SERIES

Robert Gibbons

MIT Sloan School of Management and NBER

“Culture and Institutions” Meets
“culture in organizations”

Monday, April 16, 2018

12:00 – 1:00 p.m.

Ostrom Workshop, 513 N. Park



The growing economics literature on “Culture and Institutions” explores how these concepts influence each other. For example, Guiso et al. (2013) found that a contemporary Italian city’s “social capital” correlates with its experience as a “free city” in the Middle Ages. This literature largely follows Guiso et al. (2006: 23), defining culture as “customary beliefs and values that ethnic, religious, and social groups transmit fairly unchanged from generation to generation.”

Since Schein’s (1985) seminal work, the literature on organizations has recognized that slow-moving external cultures may indeed seep into organizations and yet organizational culture might be built and changed both much more quickly and much more intentionally than external culture. This talk will explore work in progress on organizational culture, emphasizing the difficulties in building shared mental models among organization members. In brief, we seek a game-theoretic understanding of Geertz’s (1973: 12) insight that “Culture is public because meaning is.”



Robert Gibbons is an organizational economist whose research and teaching concern the design and performance of organized activities within firms (e.g., decentralization as a promise), between firms (e.g., alliances, joint ventures), and beyond firms (e.g., hospitals, schools, agencies). He often studies “relational contracts” (informal agreements that cannot be adjudicated by courts), especially the difficulties in building, managing, and changing the shared understandings that must underlie relational contracts ([website](#)).

Presentations are open to the public and are live streamed (see our website for URL and papers). You are welcome to bring your lunch. For questions, contact Allison Sturgeon (sturgeon@iu.edu; 812/855–3151).