

Trinity Term 2007

**THE SOCIOLOGY GROUP, NUFFIELD COLLEGE,
jointly with
THE COMPLEX ADAPTIVE SYSTEMS GROUP
SEMINAR**



**Please note this seminar will take place in the
Clay Room, Nuffield College starting at 5pm**

The CASG seminar series intends to provide a forum for rigorous research (in a broad range of disciplines) focusing on complex adaptive systems, using methods and techniques such as agent-based modelling and complex network analysis. Since potential areas of application for such approaches can be located across the social, natural and engineering sciences, our aim is to involve participants from a wide range of departments in Oxford. We welcome talks which focus on particular areas of application and associated technical issues, but also encourage contributions which address more fundamental conceptual or mathematical problems. The CASG Seminar Series is one of the activities of the CABDyN Research Cluster (<http://sbs-xnet.sbs.ox.ac.uk/complexity/>).

Wednesday 2nd May 5.00 – 6.30 pm

Clay Room, Nuffield College

Prof. Duncan Watts

**Department of Sociology and Collective Dynamics Group
Columbia University**

**The paradoxical nature of success in cultural markets:
An experimental approach**

ABSTRACT

Cultural objects, like movies, books, and music, vary greatly in their success, suggesting that successful and unsuccessful objects are qualitatively different; yet, paradoxically, success in cultural markets appears highly unpredictable. In this talk I argue that social influence, in the form of information about the decisions of others, can resolve the paradox. To explore the counterintuitive effects of social influence, I will discuss the results of a series of four experiments (total $n = 27,267$), conducted via a website where subjects could listen to and download new pop songs. By controlling the information that subjects received about the behaviour of others, we observed directly the effects of social influence, finding that it increased the inequality and the unpredictability of outcomes simultaneously; and that under some conditions the perceived success of a song became a self-fulfilling prophecy.

For further information contact felix.reed-tsochas@sbs.ox.ac.uk

Seminar webpage: http://sbs-xnet.sbs.ox.ac.uk/complexity/complexity_casg.asp