Sometimes we stay quiet because we don’t want to cause an argument. We keep our beliefs to ourselves because we think others will disagree. What if they do agree with us, but they are also keeping quiet because they think we disagree with them? This phenomena, called pluralistic ignorance, has been appealed to in order to explain binge drinking, sexual behaviors, and silence on climate change (among a host of other things). The phenomena is puzzling for a variety of reasons. In this talk, I will use a new computer simulation model for the emergence of pluralistic ignorance to discover under what situations we might expect it to arise. Ultimately, I conclude that pluralistic ignorance is possible, but it requires relatively special conditions. In particular, I argue that pluralistic ignorance will only arise in conditions where a community’s beliefs are shifting over time.

This event is free and open to the public.
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