

Rochester Professor Uses Economic Theory to Encourage 'More Sex'

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Go ahead, cut into line at the drinking fountain. While you are at it, ditch your leaf blower and spend the afternoon watching football instead of doing yard work. Steven E. Landsburg, professor of economics at the University of Rochester and Slate magazine columnist, argues in his new book *More Sex is Safer Sex: The Unconventional Wisdom of Economics* that those two strategies can make the world a happier place.

Landsburg is known for making economics thought-provoking and fun, and in his latest book he does it by applying the "unconventional wisdom of economics" to the mundane situations we encounter every day.

The book, published by Free Press, challenges the conventional logic of putting oneself first, by pointing out that the cost of such a move is paid by society as a whole.

For instance, when you leap to your feet at the ballpark to see an exciting catch, you can see better, but is it worth it if everyone else has to do the same? And once everyone stands, no one sees any better than if they were all sitting.

Landsburg hopes the book will give readers pause about decisions they normally make without thinking twice. "Thinking hard and thinking logically can lead to very surprising discoveries, and surprising discoveries are fun," Landsburg says.

In the preface, he calls the book a "celebration of all that is counter,

original, spare and strange." It's a challenge to common sense, which he illustrates quickly in the title chapter. There, he argues that adding more cautious people with limited sexual experiences into the dating pool decreases the chances that others will be infected with HIV.

In another chapter, he asserts that the miserly Ebenezer Scrooge from the Charles Dickens classic *A Christmas Carol* is actually quite generous. By not lighting his lamps, burning coal in his stove, or eating a turkey on Christmas, Scrooge left more fuel, coal, and food for everyone else, Landsburg writes.

In addition to *More Sex is Safer Sex*, and his monthly column "Everyday Economics" for Slate, Landsburg has written five other books, articles for Forbes, The New York Times, the Washington Post, and the Wall Street Journal, and numerous journal articles.

Source: University of Rochester

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