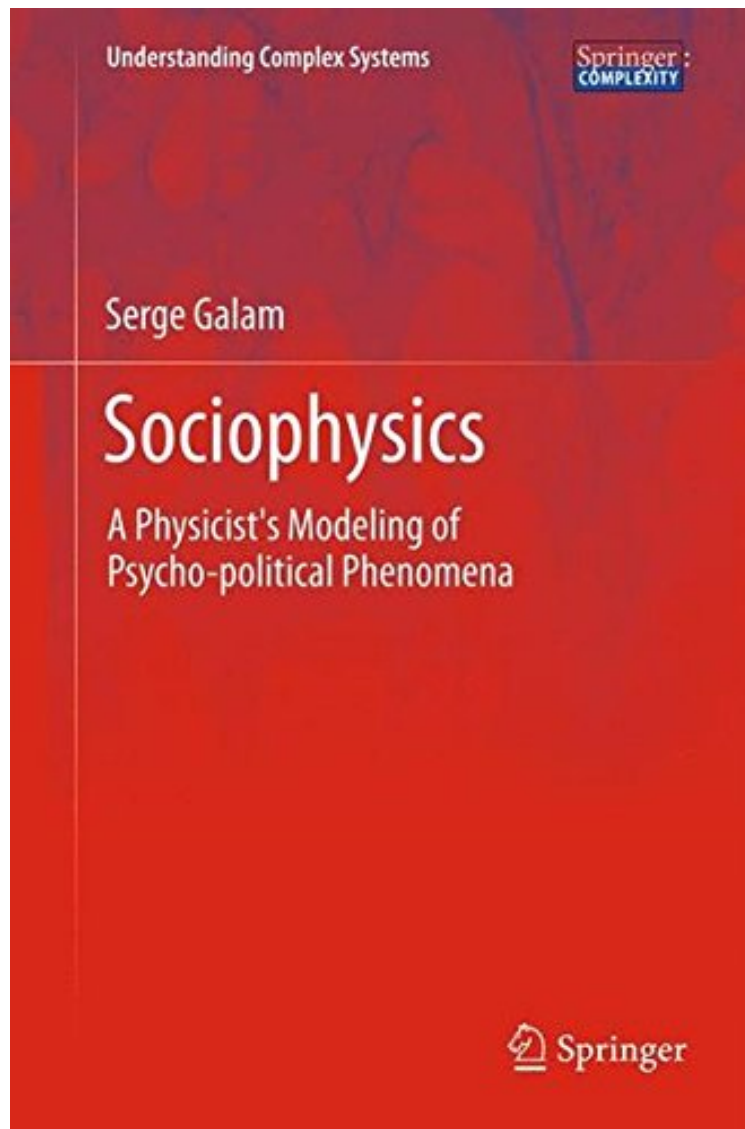


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## Sociophysics: A Physicist's Modeling of Psycho-political Phenomena (Understanding Complex Systems)

*Serge Galam*

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**Serge Galam : Sociophysics: A Physicist's Modeling of Psycho-political Phenomena (Understanding Complex Systems)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Sociophysics: A Physicist's Modeling of Psycho-political Phenomena (Understanding Complex Systems):

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. A book to discover sociophysics, its historical origins and its amazing perspectives  
By Paul Montgomery  
Do humans behave like atoms? Now that's a provocative question! And yet this book tackles the question in a very disturbing but convincing manner. Here is a very good book to discover the new field of "sociophysics", or how physics is used to help understand collective human behavior. The author uses his experience as a theoretical physicist in condensed matter physics to model human behavior in areas such as group decision making (Ising model), democratic voting processes (phase diagrams), minority spreading in opinion dynamics (reaction/diffusion model), and the dynamics of international alliances (spin glasses). I particularly appreciated the large breadth of style used by the author, together with his sharp wit. While covering the technical stuff he is also very pedagogical, using throughout a "physicist's corner" to show how physicists really do research. Then, he can be very personal when explaining his own battles to establish sociophysics as a science, not an easy thing when working between physics and sociology. The use of his own illustrations and cartoons throughout are highly original and amusing, as are his personal anecdotes. I found the book enjoyable and thought provoking reading. A plus point is that while considering philosophical questions such as freedom and ethics, the author avoids the trap of scientism, underlining that while physics may be able to help in understanding some aspects of human behavior, it will never fully describe the human situation, which is not a closed system, consisting of many layers of complexity; well said!

Do humans behave much like atoms? Sociophysics, which uses tools and concepts from the physics of disordered matter to describe some aspects of social and political behavior, answers in the affirmative. But advocating the use of models from the physical sciences to understand human behavior could be perceived as tantamount to dismissing the existence of human free will and also enabling those seeking manipulative skills. This thought-provoking book argues it is just the contrary. Indeed, future developments and evaluation will either show sociophysics to be inadequate, thus supporting the hypothesis that people can primarily be considered to be free agents, or valid, thus opening the path to a radically different vision of society and personal responsibility. This book attempts to explain why and how humans behave much like atoms, at least in some aspects of their collective lives, and then proposes how this knowledge can serve as a unique key to a dramatic leap forwards in achieving more social freedom in the real world. At heart, sociophysics and this book are about better comprehending the richness and potential of our social interaction, and so distancing ourselves from inanimate atoms.

From the Back Cover  
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About the Author  
Serge Galam is a theoretical physicist specialized in disordered systems with doctorate degrees from Paris and Tel-Aviv. After being a research associate at the City College of New York and an assistant professor at New York University, he joined the CNRS in Paris where he is currently working at the Research Center in Applied Epistemology at the 'Ecole Polytechnique. He is the proud father of sociophysics, a new field of study that he envisioned and initiated more than thirty years ago. He has authored over 120 research papers in the best international journals, three books, over 60 popular articles and 30 book chapters and given about 300 talks throughout the world.