

Social Construction of Reality



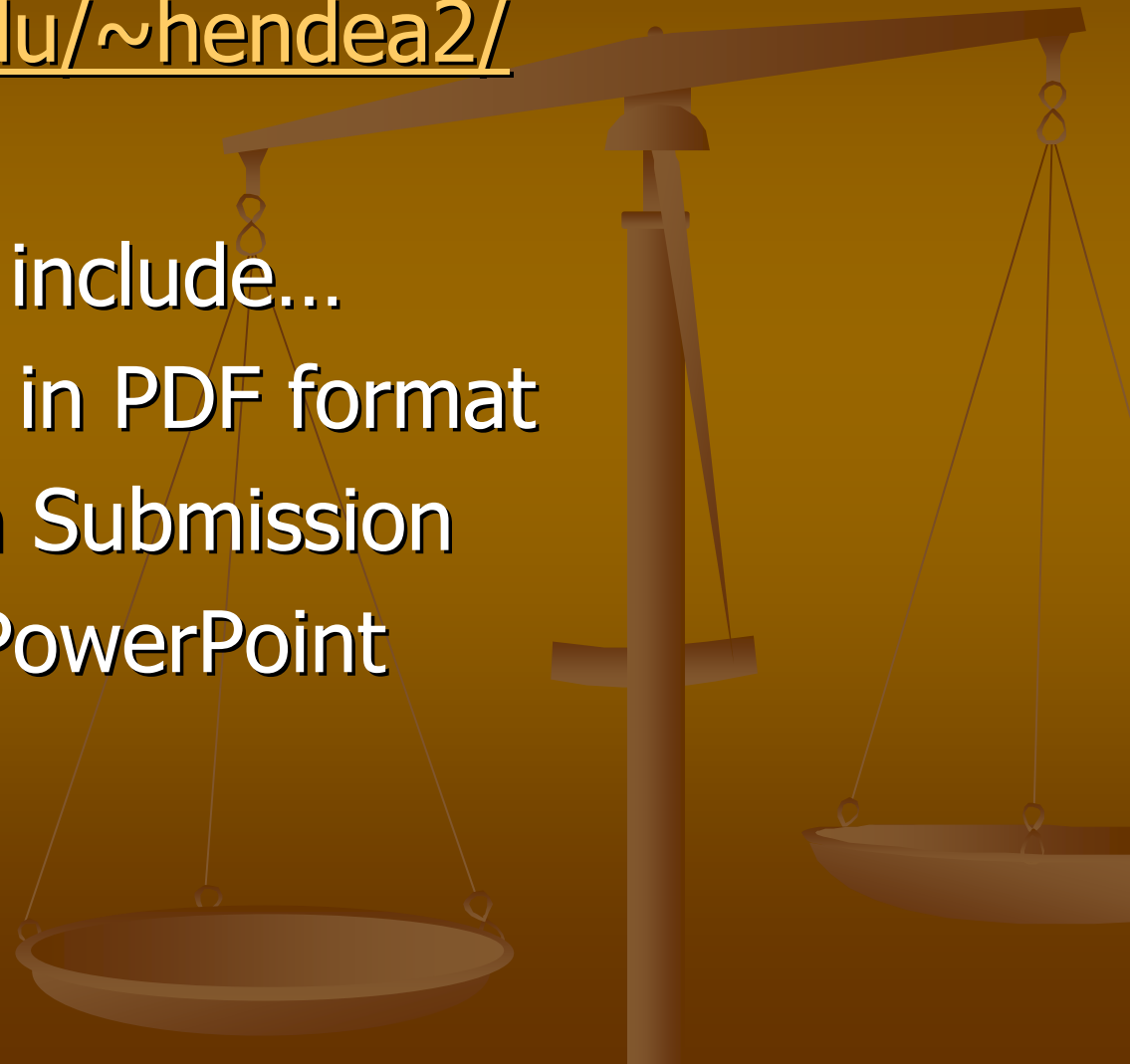
How Reality is Defined

Online Resources

<http://www.rpi.edu/~hendea2/>

Online Resources include...

- Handout Online in PDF format
- Online Question Submission
- Download this PowerPoint



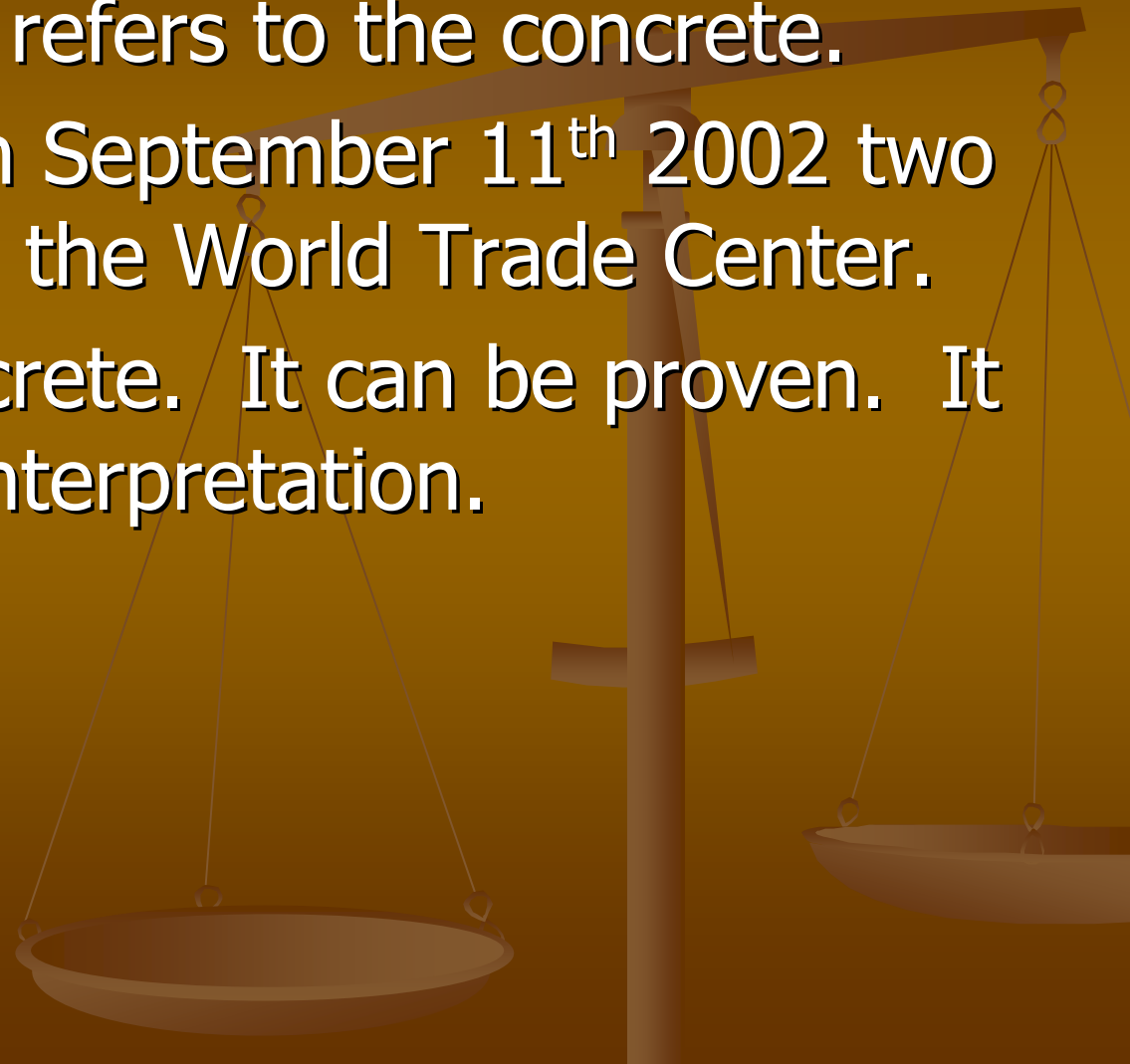
What is Social Construction of Reality



- Social Construction of Reality is based on the concept that events are open to interpretation.
- Because interpretations differ, a common base of communication must be found.
- This common base is known as social reality and is developed based on the most common interpretation of physical reality within a society.

Physical Reality

- Physical Reality refers to the concrete.
- For example, on September 11th 2002 two planes flew into the World Trade Center.
- This fact is concrete. It can be proven. It is not open to interpretation.



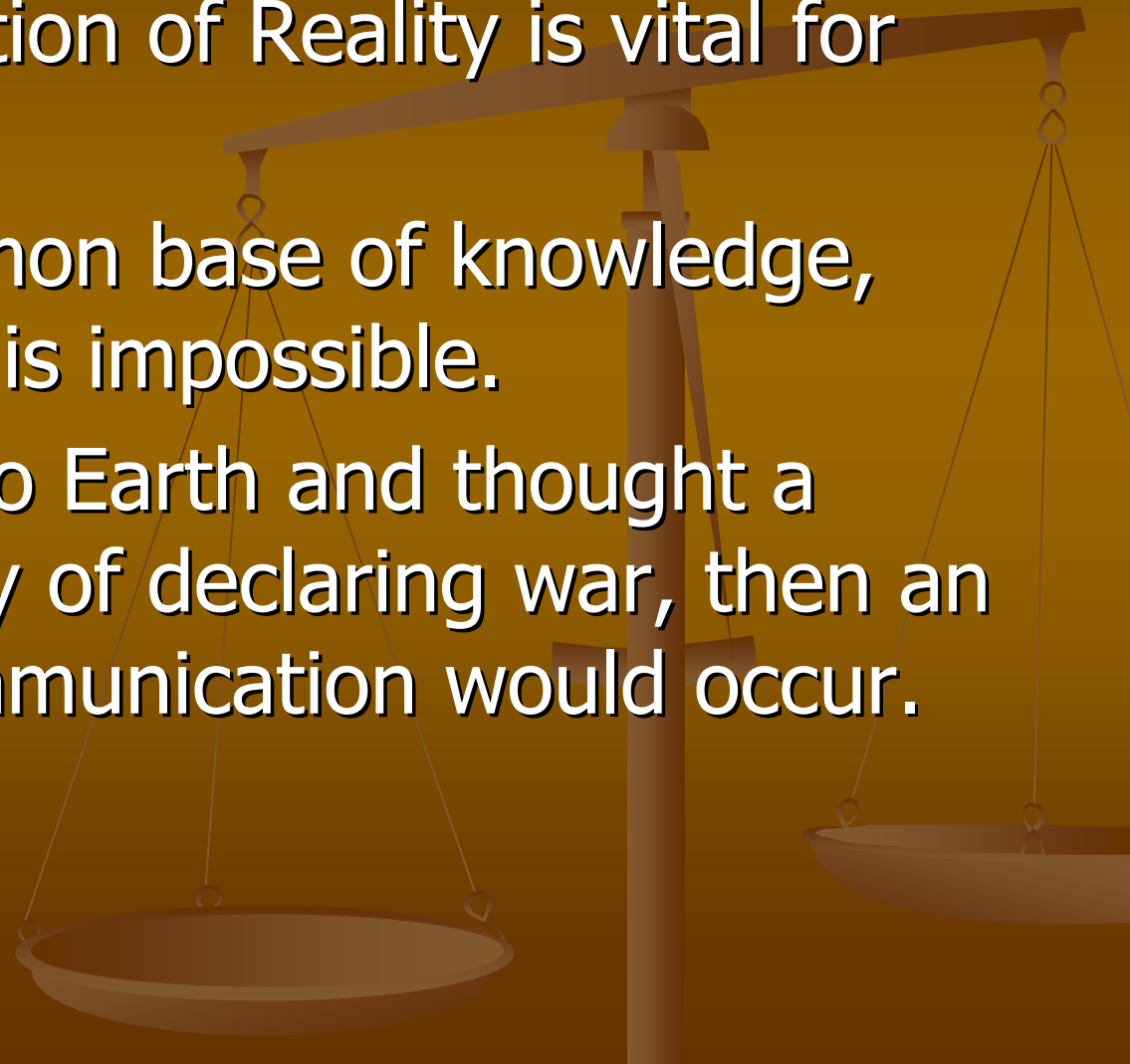
Social Reality



- Social Reality is not concrete.
- It deals with an interpretation of the physical reality and is not necessarily shared between societies.
- For example, the US sees the events of Sept. 11th as a horrible terrorist attack. The terrorists however, see this as a major success in their battle against the United States.

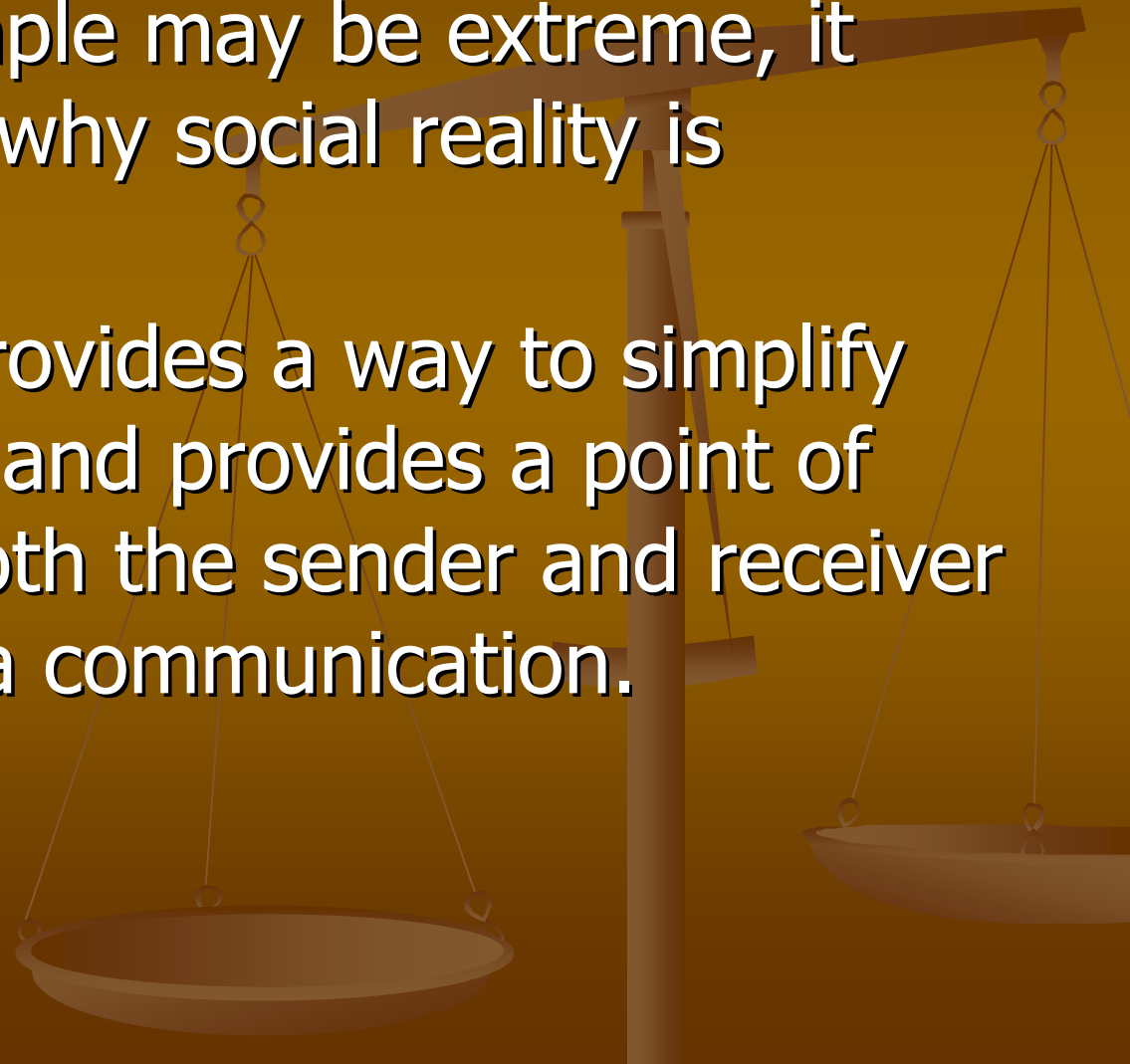
Why Do We Need Social Construction of Reality

- Social Construction of Reality is vital for communication.
- Without a common base of knowledge, communication is impossible.
- If aliens came to Earth and thought a smile was a way of declaring war, then an obvious miscommunication would occur.

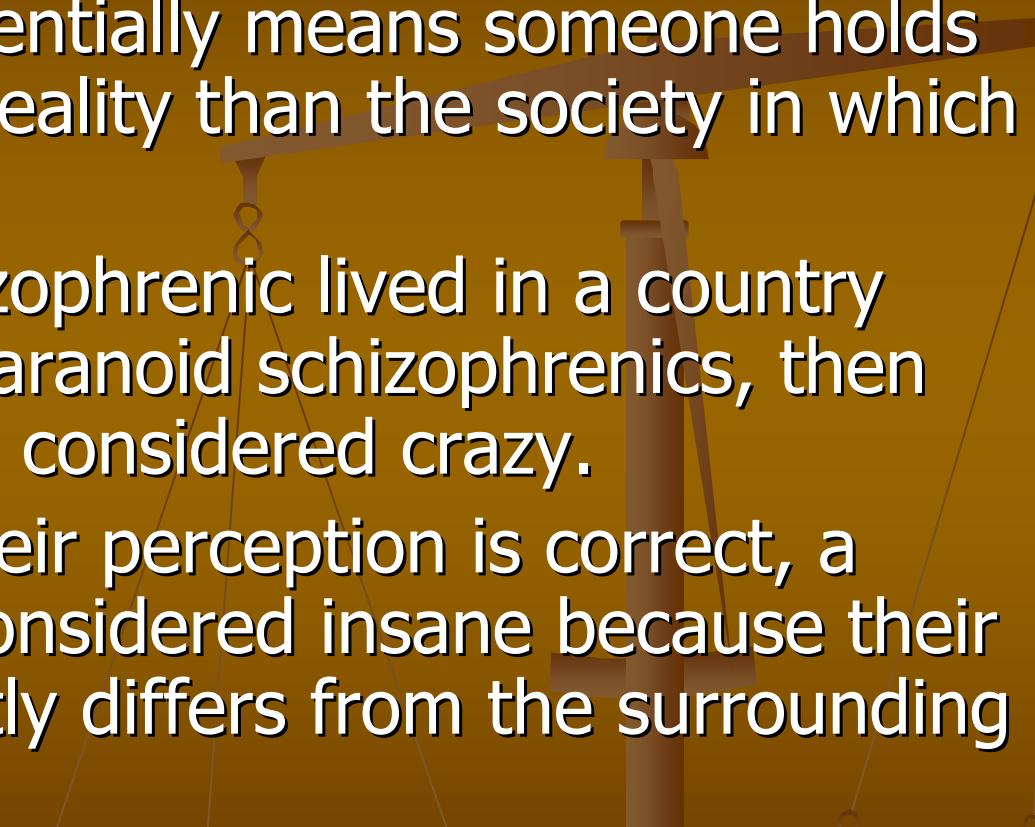


Why Do We Need Social Construction of Reality

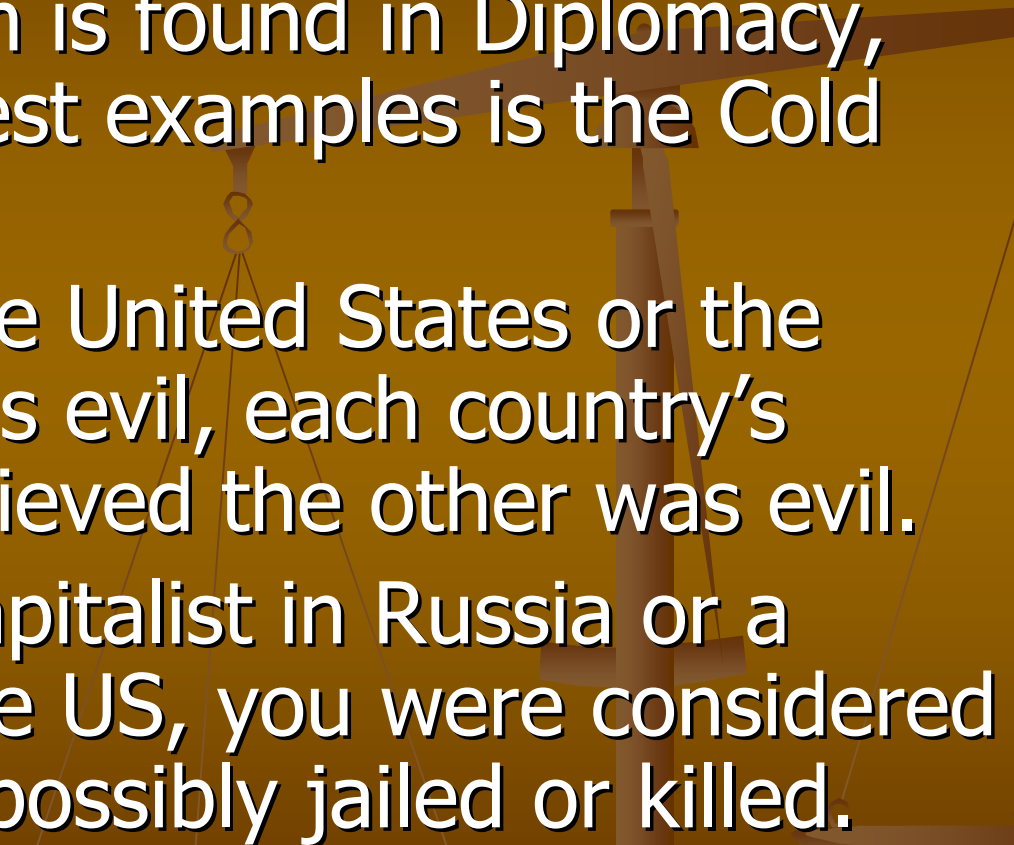
- While this example may be extreme, it serves to show why social reality is necessary.
- Social Reality provides a way to simplify communication and provides a point of reference for both the sender and receiver or receivers of a communication.



Real Life Problems Associated with Communication Between Different Social Realities

- Schizophrenia essentially means someone holds a different social reality than the society in which they live.
 - If a paranoid schizophrenic lived in a country that was mostly paranoid schizophrenics, then they would not be considered crazy.
 - Whether or not their perception is correct, a schizophrenic is considered insane because their social reality greatly differs from the surrounding society.
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Real Life Problems Associated with Communication Between Different Social Realities

- Another problem is found in Diplomacy, one of the biggest examples is the Cold War.
 - While neither the United States or the Soviet Union was evil, each country's social reality believed the other was evil.
 - If you were a capitalist in Russia or a communist in the US, you were considered dangerous and possibly jailed or killed.
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References

- J.D. Hunter and S.C. Ainley (1986), Making Sense of Modern Times, London : Routledge and Kegan Paul
- L. Spurling (1977), Phenomenology and the Social World, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul