Households sit at the intersection of two of my chief scholarly interests — forms of land tenure and the role of informal norms in human affairs. The paper I will present at the seminar session on October 1 is “Unpacking the Household: Informal Property Rights Around the Hearth.” I have made available, in .pdf form, the version recently published in the Yale Law Journal. The article runs about one hundred pages, far longer than the usual workshop fare. To get the flavor of the endeavor, you need only read the Introduction, Parts I-III, and the Conclusion, which together are twenty-seven pages in length.

Economists and others particularly interested in the organization of institutions might look at Part V, which addresses the ownership structure of households (and perhaps also at Part VI, which deals with issues of household scale and reasons why many household heads prefer homeownership). Sociologists and the law-oriented might sample Part VII, which discusses when members of a household are likely to engage in gift exchange, cash transactions, and explicit contracting. I am particularly interested in the reaction of political scientists to the discussion at pages 300–03, which seeks to explain why household members typically prefer to seek consensus on an issue rather than to resolve the issue by formal vote. Part IV, which recounts the unpromising history of unconventional household forms, may provoke readers with a utopian bent.

I am in the last stages of preparing the manuscript of a slightly longer book version of this work. My working title is Homeways: How People Constitute and Govern Their Households. The Princeton University Press is the publisher. Our forthcoming seminar session is my final occasion for airing these ideas before the book is set in stone.

I look forward to the event.