

## Anthropology 6101: Proseminar in Biological Anthropology Spring 2014

Professor Chet Sherwood  
Class location: HAH 202  
Class time: Thursday, 11:10am-1:30pm  
Office hours: Thursday, 1:30pm-3:30pm  
Office location: 2114 G St. Room 303

### **Course description:**

The purpose of this course is to provide graduate students in anthropology with a foundation in the core principles of the subfield of biological anthropology. We will survey topics that address current theoretical issues and empirical findings pertaining to our species' evolution and the biological basis of human behavior. Considering the multidisciplinary nature of biological anthropology, this course will focus on topics including evolutionary theory, paleoanthropology, primatology, life history, and cognitive science.

### **Learning Objectives:**

In this course, students will:

1. Obtain an understanding of the evolutionary framework and theoretical concepts that are fundamental to biological anthropology, and an appreciation of how these ideas have developed over time.
2. Learn the basic empirical evidence relevant to humans' place in nature, our evolutionary history, and diversity in our species today.
3. Be able to analyze and critically examine literature in biological anthropology and construct written work that argues a specific point with empirical evidence to support it.

### **Course requirements:**

- 1) *Class attendance, participation, and weekly reaction papers (20%)*  
Attendance is mandatory, and will be taken. This class is a seminar, and discussion is critical. Therefore, you are expected to come prepared to discuss the readings. As part of your participation grade, you will be required to submit a weekly reaction paper on the readings by 5 pm on the Tuesday before class. This paper is not to exceed one page (double-spaced) in length, and is to be submitted via Blackboard to the Discussion Board. ***These papers should not simply summarize the readings for that week.*** Rather, you should use it as an opportunity to discuss an aspect of the reading you found especially interesting, or argue a point you found contentious. You are also expected to read your classmates' reaction papers on Blackboard and be prepared to discuss any issues that were raised which you found particularly interesting.

2) *In-class presentation (15%)*

You will be responsible for leading discussion during one class session. You are expected to present the main points of the readings for that class, and draw on at least two additional outside sources to present on the topic. Again, as for your reaction paper, do not just summarize the readings. You are expected to create a PowerPoint presentation to organize your overview and to facilitate discussion. After your presentation, you should have a sufficient set of questions to generate and continue discussion. Additionally, discussion leaders are expected to have read their classmates' reaction papers and should be prepared to raise questions stemming from these postings.

3) *Biological anthropology news update (5%)*

At the beginning of class, one student will present a brief 5-minute update on recent research from the news related to a topic in biological anthropology.

4) *Research paper (35%) – Due at beginning of class, April 24*

The point of this assignment is to have you conduct in-depth literature research, on a topic you find interesting. As you know, we only have a semester to review a select set of areas within a huge field of study – while we do our best to give you some “big picture” background, there's lots more to learn. Pick a topic within one of the modules (below) for your literature review (guidelines will be on Blackboard, and please come see me with questions). This review should be 10-12 pages, double spaced, Helvetica 12 point font, with 1-inch margins. Specific style guidelines will be posted on Blackboard. Late papers will be penalized one grade (e.g., down from a B to a B-) per day.

5) *Qualifying exam (25%) – Distributed April 28, Due May 5*

This is a take-home exam, covering everything we've read and discussed in class. The format is 5 short essay questions, which should be answered in 2 (double-spaced) pages each. More specific details about picking up, and turning in, exams will be provided in class.

## Readings:

Class is organized in four modules, each covering an area within biological anthropology. All of the books listed below are required. You may find it useful, if you have not taken courses in biological anthropology before to read an introductory textbook for reference. The one used in the introductory course at GW is 'Biological Anthropology' by Stanford, Allen and Antón.

### Module 1: Evolution (Jan. 16, 23, 30, Feb. 6)

Required texts:

1. Darwin C. 1859. *On the Origin of Species*. John Murray
2. Gould SJ. 1992. *Ever Since Darwin: Reflections in Natural History*. W.W. Norton.

Jan. 16: Welcome and Introduction

Jan. 23: Darwin, Chapters 1-4

Jan. 30: Gould, Parts 1-6

Feb. 6: Gould, Parts 7-8 (*guest lecture from Prof. Bernard Wood*)

### Module 2: Primate Behavior (Feb. 13, 20, 27, March 6)

Required texts:

1. Goodall J. 1988. *In the Shadow of Man*. Houghton Mifflin.
2. Cheney DL & Seyfarth. 2007. *Baboon Metaphysics: The Evolution of a Social Mind*. University of Chicago Press.

Feb. 13: *Snow day, class canceled*

Feb. 20: Goodall, Preface-Chapter 16

Feb. 27: Goodall, Chapters 17-Appendices; Cheney & Seyfarth, Chapters 1-5  
(*guest lecture from Prof. Carson Murray*)

March 6: Cheney & Seyfarth, Chapters 6-12

### Module 3: Human Evolution and Variation (March 20, 27, April 3)

Required texts:

1. Wood B. 2006. *Human Evolution: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press.
2. Gibbons A. 2007. *The First Human: The Race to Discover Our Earliest Ancestors*. Anchor.
3. Jablonski N. 2012. *Living Color: The Biological and Social Meaning of Skin Color*. University of California Press.

March 13: *Spring Break, no class*

March 20: Wood, entire book; Gibbons, Part 1 (*guest lecture from Prof. Brian Richmond*)

March 27: Gibbons, Parts 2-3  
April 3: Jablonski, entire book

Module 4: Human Life History and Cognition (April 10, 17, 24, 29)

Required texts:

1. Hrdy SB. 2009. *Mothers and Others: The Evolutionary Origins of Mutual Understanding*. The Belknap Press.
2. Konner M. 2002. *The Tangled Wing*. Holt.

April 10: Hrdy, Chapters 1-5

April 17: Hrdy, Chapters 6-9

April 24: Konner, Parts 1-2 (*guest lecture from Prof. Francys Subiaul*)

April 29: Konner, Parts 3-5

**Academic integrity:** All graded work must be completed in accordance with The George Washington University Code of Academic Integrity, available online:

<http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html>

**Support for students outside of the classroom:**

Disability Support Services (DSS). Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Marvin Center, Suite 242, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information, please refer to <http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/>

University Counseling Center (UCC). The Counseling Center (UCC) offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include: crisis and emergency mental health consultations; and confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals. You can reach the UCC at 202-994-5300. For additional information, please refer to

<http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices>

**Security:** In the case of emergency, if at all possible, the class should shelter in place. If the building that the class is in is affected, follow the evacuation procedures for the building. After the evacuation, seek shelter at a predetermined rendezvous location.