

ANTH 6101: PROSEMINAR IN BIOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY
Spring 2017

THURS, 11:10 am – 1:30 pm; SEH Room 6845 (North wing)

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Office Hours: Wed, 9:00-11:00am, or by appointment

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 (15%)*

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 9am on the Wednesday 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. ***Reaction papers should not simply summarize the readings for that week***. Rather, they should include two elements: A) You should use these papers as an opportunity to discuss an aspect of the reading you found especially interesting, or argue a point you found contentious. B) You should also ***pose questions*** for discussion. Finally, 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 preparing a presentation to lead 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 peer-reviewed scientific articles*** (primary research articles with data) 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 points and questions stemming from these postings. ***Send me your Power Point presentation by 10:00AM on the day of your designated class discussion, so this can be posted to blackboard.***

In this exercise, you have a responsibility to two parties. First, you have a responsibility to the author to present their work accurately, and provide meaningful and constructive commentary. Second, you have a responsibility to the class, to serve as a guide to the reading, facilitate understanding, and help connect it to other themes of the course.

To follow are a few questions that you might consider in your presentation. This is not an exhaustive list, and all questions posed here may not be appropriate for the work you are reviewing. This is simply meant to help get you started:

- Why should we care? What is the importance of the work, or its influence on work that followed? How does it fit into other existing literature?
- Is there a particular problem the work attempts to address?
- Identify the key points covered in the readings, focusing on the 'big picture'. What is the central argument or hypothesis? Can you break it down into its components? For research papers, what method is used, and is this appropriate?
- Is the argument convincing? What evidence is cited in support of it? Could the argument be framed differently? Has the argument and/or interpretations presented in the work changed over time with the addition of new data?
- How is the argument informed (or contradicted) by other data? (This latter question is where the outside sources come in.) Can it help us understand other problems?
- Any other constructive comments, questions, or points raised in the Reaction Papers.

3) Act as a Discussant (5%)

During weeks when no presenter is scheduled, two students (depending on class size and remaining class periods) will work together to act as Discussants. They are not required to develop a formal PowerPoint presentation, or consult outside readings. However, they should come prepared to lead the class discussion and keep it focused on the reading. Discussants are encouraged to consider some of the questions posed above as they prepare.

4) Biological anthropology news update (5%)

Every week there is something new in the media about human or nonhuman primate evolutionary biology, behavior and ecology, morphology, and/or life history, and it is both important to keep up with these findings and provide a venue to briefly discuss them in class. At the beginning of class, one student will present **a brief 7-10 minute update on recent research from the news related to a topic in biological anthropology**. This also presents an opportunity to consider how science is interpreted by the media, and through the media then communicated to the general public. Instructions for the news updates are posted to blackboard.

5) Research paper and presentation (35%) – Due by 10am, April 27

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 a lot 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, 12 point font, with 1-inch margins. Specific guidelines will be posted on Blackboard, and we will also allow some time in class for discussion of topics. Late papers will be penalized one grade (e.g., down from a B to a B-) per day. The written paper is worth 30% of your total course grade.

You will present your research to the class in the form of a Power Point presentation, to be given during our last class meeting on **April 27th**. A rubric for this presentation will be posted to blackboard. The presentation is worth 5% of your total course grade.

6) Qualifying exam (25%) – Due date TBA

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 details about picking up, and turning in, exams will be provided in class.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS:

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

In addition to readings listed below, you will also be assigned the occasional journal article from the peer-reviewed scientific literature. These will be posted to Blackboard one week in advance.

Module 1: Evolution

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.

Module 2: Primate Behavior

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.

Module 3: Human Evolution and Variation

1. Wood B. (2006) *Human Evolution: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press.
2. Reader J. (2011) *Missing Links: In Search of Human Origins*. Oxford University Press.
3. Jablonski N. (2012) *Living Color: The Biological and Social Meaning of Skin Color*. University of California Press.

Module 4: Human Life History and Cognition

1. Hrdy SB. (2009) *Mothers and Others: The Evolutionary Origins of Mutual Understanding*. The Belknap Press.
2. Gluckman P and Hanson M. (2008) *Mismatch – The Lifestyle Diseases Timebomb*. Oxford University Press.

Schedule of topics and readings. (Subject to change)

DATE	READINGS	Lectures & Guests
Module 1: Evolution		
Jan. 19	Welcome and Course Mechanics	
Jan. 26	Darwin (1859), Ch. 1-4	Overview Lecture
Feb. 2	Gould (1992), Parts 1-5	
Feb. 9	Gould (1992), Parts 6-8	Dr. Andrey Verendeev
Module 2: Primate Behavior		
Feb. 16	Goodall (1988), Preface - Ch. 15	Overview Lecture
Feb. 23	Goodall (1988), Ch. 16-Append; Cheney & Seyfarth (2007), Ch. 1-5	J. Miller & K. Wellens
Mar. 2	Cheney & Seyfarth (2007), Ch. 6-12 (Paper topic due)	Dr. Chet Sherwood
Module 3: Human Evolution and Variation		
Mar. 9	Wood (2006), Entire book (use as a resource); Reader (2001), Ch. 1-7	Overview Lecture
Mar. 16	<u>NO CLASS: Spring Break</u>	
Mar. 23	Reader (2011), Chapters 8-17	
Mar. 30	Jablonski (2012), Entire book	Dr. Ashley Hammond
Module 4: Human Life History and Health		
Apr. 6	Hrdy (2009), Entire book	Overview Lecture
Apr. 13	Gluckman and Hanson (2008), Entire book	
Apr. 20	<u>NO CLASS: AAPA Meeting</u>	
Apr. 27	Student Research Presentations	
QUALIFYING EXAM: TBA		

OTHER POLICIES AND RESOURCES:

Time & Effort

This is a 3 credit hour class. In addition to the 140 minutes per week of direct interaction in class, it is anticipated that you will spend a minimum of 5.2 hours per week (on average over a 15-week semester) on independent learning outside of class (i.e., readings and other assignments).

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.