

# Evolution of Human Nature

Anthropology 1050-401, Semester:

TDays/Times/location:

Instructor: email:

Office: ; phone:

Office Hours:

## Goals and Objectives:

An introduction to modern evolutionary theory, its application to anthropological questions, and its relevance to understanding global issues. Specific topics covered include non-human primate behavior, natural selection and sexual selection, human mating behavior, marriage, family dynamics, basic life history theory, the origins of language, religion, competition, status, violence, and altruism.

## Required Texts:

The main textbook for this course is Cartwright, J. (2016). *Evolution and human behaviour: Darwinian perspectives on the human condition*.

I will regularly post additional readings to the course website on canvas.

## Requirements and Grading:

Your grades in this course will be based upon three components: quizzes, online discussion board participation, and short essays; there will generally be one of each assignment type per week. The course is organized into thematic modules, each lasting from one to three weeks. All three assignment types will be administered through Canvas.

## Description of Assessments:

- **Quizzes:** there will be one quiz per week. Quizzes will generally be worth 10-15 points each (one point per question). Quiz questions will be drawn from the textbook, class, inclass and out-of-class films, and posted readings. **I will drop each student's 2 lowest quiz scores from their final grade.**

- **Online Discussion:** there will be one online discussion assignment per week. The questions will be drawn from the textbook, lectures, films, outside websites, articles and/or news and current events. Occasionally they will be based on in-class activities. For each of these, students are required to submit a post of their own and respond to at least two of their classmates' posts. Each of these will be worth 5-10 points. **I will drop each student's lowest discussion assignment score from their final grade.**
- **Formal Writing:** there will be one short answer/essay assignment each week with questions drawn from the readings, films, and other class materials. Each of these will be worth 5-10 points. **I will drop each student's lowest short answer/essay assignment score from their final grade.**

## Late Work Policy:

Quizzes lock at midnight the day they are due and will not be reopened. All other late work will be marked down 1 point per day. After two weeks, all assignments lock.

## Student Responsibilities

**All quizzes lock at midnight on the day they are due and will not be reopened. All other late work is marked down 1 point per day.** Equipment or technology failures (e.g. computer, Canvas etc.) are not acceptable excuses for late or absent assignments. It is recommended that you submit work early to allow time to fix any technical problems that arise.

This course focuses on potentially controversial topics, and students are expected to approach all course material with an open mind, and all class assignments and discussions with sensitivity and nuance. This is especially true of the opinions of your classmates. **Be respectful and sensitive towards others.**

Students are referred to the Student Code of Conduct regarding appropriate behavior, cheating, plagiarism, discrimination, etc.

[http://www.slcc.edu/policies/docs/Student\\_Code\\_of\\_Conduct.pdf](http://www.slcc.edu/policies/docs/Student_Code_of_Conduct.pdf)

## Plagiarism Statement

Plagiarism is taking credit for another person's words, works, and ideas or failing to acknowledge that person's words, works, and ideas. If you borrow from someone else you must give that person credit through proper citations. The first offense in which students are

caught plagiarizing or cheating on assignments and tests will result in the failure of that assignment. A second offense may result in course failure.

## **Artificial Intelligence Statement**

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) software is a rapidly emerging tool that students may be interested in using. If doing so, SLCC students are expected to adhere to the same standards as the Student Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities statement on plagiarism. **Presenting generative AI software content as your own is a violation of academic integrity. In this class, AI generated work will be treated the same as plagiarized work. All formal assignments must cite the ONLY the course materials unless otherwise stated. In general, this means that examples from the readings will include page numbers, examples from films will include video timestamp, all examples from lecture will include a date and/or slide number, and all direct quotes will include quotation marks. Specific requirements will be included on each individual assignment. NOTE: these stipulations will not always apply to discussion assignments.**

## **Schedule (this schedule is tentative and subject to change):**

Week One: Course Introduction and What is Anthropology?

- **Strongly recommended for students who have not taken an introductory cultural anthropology course:** Nanda, S., & Warmes, R. L. (2017). *Culture counts: A concise introduction to cultural anthropology*, pp. 2-22.
- Begin reading Cartwright, chapter 1.

Weeks Two and Three: Introduction to/History of Darwinian Social Science

- Cartwright, chapters 1 and 2.
- Barkow, J. H. (2006). Introduction: Sometimes the bus does wait. *Missing the revolution: Darwinism for social scientists*, pp. 3-44.
- Robert Wright (1994), *The Moral Animal*, pp. 3-15.
- **SUGGESTED:** Smith, E. A. (2000). Three styles in the evolutionary analysis of human behavior. In L. Cronk, N. A. Chagnon, & W. Irons (Eds.). *Adaptation and human behavior*, (pp. 27-46).

Weeks Four and Five: Natural Selection, Sexual Selection, and the Selfish Gene

- Cartwright, chapters 3 and 4.
- Grafen, A. (2006). The intellectual contribution of The Selfish Gene to evolutionary theory. A. Grafen A. & Ridley M. (Eds), *Richard dawkins: how a scientist changed the way we think: reflections by scientists writers and philosophers* (pp. 66-74).

- Mulder, M. B. (2017). The demographic transition: are we any closer to an evolutionary explanation?. In Penn D. J. & Mysterud I. (Eds.), *Evolutionary Perspectives on Environmental Problems* (pp. 237-248).

#### Weeks Six and Seven: Human Evolutionary History and its Relevance/ Adaptations and Developmental Plasticity

- **SKIM:** Cartwright, chapters 5 and 6.
- Cartwright, chapter 7 (**SKIM** section 7.2.3 [pp. 117-125]; read the rest) and chapter 8.
- Betzig, L. (2013). Fathers versus Sons. In M. Fisher, R. Sokol Chang, & J. Garcia (Eds.), *Evolution's empress: Darwinian perspectives on the nature of women* (pp. 187-203).
- Schmitt, D. P., & Rohde, P. A. (2013). The human polygyny index and its ecological correlates: Testing sexual selection and life history theory at the cross-national level. *Social Science Quarterly*, 94(4), 1159-1184. [**PORTIONS**]

#### Weeks Seven and Eight: Making a Living

- Sanderson, S. K. (2018). *Human nature and the evolution of society.*, chapters 3 and 4 (pp. 38-78).
- Linden, D. J. (2011), "Food, Pleasure and Evolution" (*Psychology Today*).
- Bergland (2016). "The Evolutionary Psychology of Human Beings' Urge to Overeat" (*Psychology Today*).
- Higginson, A. D., McNamara, J. M., & Houston, A. I. (2016). *Fatness and fitness: exposing the logic of evolutionary explanations for obesity. Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 283(1822), 20152443.

#### Weeks Eight and Nine: Cognition and Emotions

- Cartwright, chapters 9 and 10.
- Kurzban, R. (2011). *Why everyone (else) is a hypocrite*, pp. 132-150.

#### Weeks Ten and Eleven: Altruism, Cooperation, Conflict, and Crime

- Cartwright, chapters 11 and 12.
- Smuts, B. (1996). Male Aggression against Women. In D. M. Buss & N. Malamuth (Eds.), *Sex, power, conflict: Evolutionary and feminist perspectives*, pp. 231-268.
- **Suggested:** Wrangham, R. W., & Peterson, D. (1996). *Demonic males: Apes and the origins of human violence*, pp. 127-152.

#### Weeks Twelve, Thirteen, and Fourteen: Mating and Parenting

- Cartwright, chapter 13: **READ** section 13.1 (pages 255-257); **SKIM** section 13.2 (pages 257-264); **read** section 13.3 (pages 264-266).
- Cartwright, chapter 14.
- Cartwright, chapter 15: sections 15.1-15.6 (pages 293-310).

- Cartwright, chapter 16.
- **SKIM** Cartwright, chapter 17.
- Cartwright, chapter 20.

Weeks Fifteen and Sixteen: Religion and Ethics/Current Controversies and Future Directions

- Cartwright, chapters 20 and 21.
- Sanderson, S. K. (2018). *Human nature and the evolution of society.*, chapter 13 (pp. 225-234).
- Stewart-Williams, S. (2010). *Darwin, God and the meaning of life: How evolutionary theory undermines everything you thought you knew*, 201-222.
- Voland (2009), "Evaluating the Evolutionary Status of Religiosity and Religiousness", *The Biological Evolution of Religious Mind and Behavior*, 9-24.
- Gibson, M. A., & Lawson, D. W. (2015). Applying evolutionary anthropology. *Evolutionary Anthropology: Issues, News, and Reviews*, 24(1), 3-14.
- Stewart-Williams, S. (2010). *Darwin, God and the meaning of life: How evolutionary theory undermines everything you thought you knew*, 201-222.

**See the course Canvas website for the complete list of assignments and due dates.**

## Writing Intensive Designation

This course is designated as Writing Intensive (WI). Writing intensive is a high-impact practice that actively engages students in the learning process. In this course, you will engage with writing in multiple assignments, will receive feedback on your writing from the instructor, and will have opportunities to revise written work. For more information, see [here](#).

## Institutional Syllabus

Find it [here](#).

## Important Dates

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## Course Learning Outcomes

Course Learning Outcomes
Explain the field and subfields of anthropology including the approaches and methods used by anthropologists.
Explain the logic of evolutionary theory, its relevance to major questions of various aspects of human behavior (e.g. politics, policy, education, etc.), and its applications to other disciplines (e.g. psychiatry, medicine, etc.).
Use simple ecological models to analyze data from an evolutionary perspective.
Using the methods of evolutionary social science, explain, compare, contrast, and/or analyze global cultural diversity (e.g. economic practices, political systems, dynamics of power, stratification, gender, race/ethnicity, kinship, marriage, and the formation of families, creative expression, religious beliefs, practices, and rituals, etc.), including <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. human universals that transcend national borders</li><li>2. how the theory of evolution by natural selection contributes to an understanding of these phenomena</li></ol>
Describe and analyze the basic assumptions of evolutionary ecological theory (e.g. optimal foraging theory, life history theory, etc.).
Compare/contrast the assumptions of evolutionary ecology with other modern evolutionary approaches to human behavior (e.g. evolutionary psychology, gene-culture coevolution, etc.).
Analyze and explain the history of the misuses of evolutionary theory in the social sciences (e.g. Social Darwinism, racialism, eugenics, etc.) and evaluate the distinction between the normative and the scientific/empirical aspects of these debates.