

Evolutionary Anthropology
Spring 2023
(syllabus subject to change)

Class time & location: Thursdays 11-14 (6pm-9pm); 成均苑 8 幢 1127

Discussions: ~45 minutes immediately after lectures

Final Examination Date: May 6th, 2023

Instructor:

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Course Description

This course will be a general survey course of evolutionary anthropology with a special focus on the behavioral aspect, both as a sub-discipline of anthropology and as an interdisciplinary research program that combines insights from biology, psychology, economics and history to make sense of human behavior and culture. Rather than opposing 'biological' and 'cultural' explanations, this course will layout a framework that illuminates learning and culture within a broad evolutionary framework that will permit us to explore kinship, food preferences (sugar, salt, etc.), incest, altruism, sex differences, social status, homicide, and religion. Using a comparative approach, we will contextualize human behavior by examining both studies of non-human primates, especially chimpanzees, as well as the full breadth of human diversity, including both ethnographic and experimental data from hunter-gatherers, herders and agriculturalists and—the most unusual of all—people from industrialized societies. We also consider how cultural evolution has shaped our genetic evolution, both over our species evolutionary history and in more recent millennia.

Course Materials and Resources

This course aims to integrate multimedia class lectures, films and class discussions with readings from scientific journals and broadly-accessible popular writings.

Course requirements and grading

The course grading has two components: (1) examinations (1 mid-term (30%) and 1 final (50%)); (2) participation (discussions and in-class presentation) (20%).

Mid-term examination: we will have one in-class mid-term designed to test students' mastery of the material. The format of this exam will be "closed-book", with a combination of multiple-choice questions and short-answer questions. This

exam will be held in the beginning of class 5.

Final Exam: The final is cumulative over the entire semester, but will otherwise resemble the mid-terms. Like the mid-terms, it will be ‘closed-book’ and draw on the required readings, films and lectures.

Participation: Students are expected to attend lectures and discussions, and to actively participate by engaging the material with questions, comments and observations. Each student will also present a paper of their choice for 10 minutes (papers need to be proposed to and approved by the instructor. All students will be randomly assigned a class to present, to be announced before the second class) either individually or as a group of no more than two people. **Your presentation may be in Chinese.**

Schedule

Class #	Day and Date	Topics and Assignments
Class 1	Thursday (3/2/2023)	<p>Introduction: Plan for the course, expectations, and outline.</p> <p>The Big Questions: Where do we come from? What’s special about humans? What’s the secret of our species’ immense ecological success?</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • López, S., Van Dorp, L., & Hellenthal, G. (2015). Human dispersal out of Africa: a lasting debate. <i>Evolutionary Bioinformatics</i>, 11, EBO-S33489. • Whiten, A., & Erdal, D. (2012). The human socio-cognitive niche and its evolutionary origins. <i>Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences</i>, 367(1599), 2119-2129. • Pinker, S. (2010). The cognitive niche: Coevolution of intelligence, sociality, and language. <i>Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences</i>, 107(supplement_2), 8993-8999. • Boyd, R., Richerson, P. J., & Henrich, J. (2011). The cultural niche: Why social learning is essential for human adaptation. <i>Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences</i>, 108(supplement_2), 10918-10925.
Class 2	Thursday (3/9/2023)	<p>Non-Human Primates and Hunter-Gatherers: What can primates tell us about human psychology and behavior? How similar are human to non-human primates? Why are primates interesting for understanding human nature? What kinds of environments did humans evolve in? How important was foraging and hunting? Was there a division of labor between males and females? How big were the groups? Where did they live?</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrangham & Pilbeam (2001). African apes as time machines. In: Galdikas BMF et al (eds). <i>All apes great and small. Volume 1:</i>

		<p><i>chimpanzees, bonobos, and gorillas</i>. New York: Kluwer Academic / Plenum. p 5-18.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boyd & Silk “How humans evolved” chapter 5: Primate diversity and ecology • Wiessner (2014) Embers of society: firelight talk among the Ju/'hoansi Bushmen. <i>PNAS</i>, 111:14027-14035. • Kaplan et al. (2009) The evolutionary and ecological roots of human social organization. <i>Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B</i>, 364: 3289-3299 <p>Film:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The people of the forest: the chimps of Gombe</i> (https://tinyurl.com/ya779zqu)
Class 3	Thursday (3/16/2023)	<p>Natural Selection and the Broad Sweep of Human Evolutionary History: How does evolution and natural selection work? What's the evidence for evolution and how it works? Can natural selection really create complex structures like the eye, or the emotion of jealousy, via small random changes? Is there evidence that humans are affected by natural selection? What is the difference between an ultimate and proximate causes of a behavior?</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wilson (2007) <i>Evolution for Everyone</i>. Chapters 3-9 <p>Film:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Evolution of the Peppered Moth by Natural Selection</i> (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pop-xetGaBM&ab_channel=By%3ARachelTaylor)
Class 4	Thursday (3/23/2023)	<p>The Design of the Human Mind: How has the human mind been shaped by evolution by natural selection? What were the key adaptive problems of our evolutionary past? How can experimental psychology and cognitive anthropology contribute to our understanding of evolved psychological mechanisms?</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tooby, J., & Cosmides, L. (2015). Conceptual foundations of evolutionary psychology. <i>The handbook of evolutionary psychology</i>, 5-67. • Confer, J. C., Easton, J. A., Fleischman, D. S., Goetz, C. D., Lewis, D. M., Perilloux, C., & Buss, D. M. (2010). Evolutionary psychology: Controversies, questions, prospects, and limitations. <i>American Psychologist</i>, 65(2), 110. <p>Film:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Steven Pinker: Human nature and the blank slate</i> (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CuQHSLXu2c&ab_channel=TED)
Class 5	Thursday (3/30/2023)	<p>The Evolution of Culture, Cultural Evolution, and Evolutionary Social Sciences: How can evolutionary theory be used to construct a theory of</p>

		<p>cultural evolution? Are “cultural” and “evolutionary” explanations really opposed? How is evolutionary theory applied in the social and behavioral sciences?</p> <p>Midterm exam (30 minutes)</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smith, E. A., Mulder, M. B., & Hill, K. (2001). Controversies in the evolutionary social sciences: A guide for the perplexed. <i>Trends in ecology & evolution</i>, 16(3), 128-135. • 洪泽 (preprint). 演化社会科学 – 历史, 现状和展望 • 罗力群(2015),进化社会科学导论.Chapter 7,8 and 9
Class 6	Thursday (4/6/2023)	<p>Cooperation, Food Sharing, and Social Norms: How can altruism evolve? Why do some species routinely share food and others do not? What are social norms from an evolutionary perspective, and how do they relate to human cooperation? Where do reputations come from?</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boyd, R., & Richerson, P. J. (2009). Culture and the evolution of human cooperation. <i>Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences</i>, 364(1533), 3281-3288. • Jaeggi & Gurven (2013). Natural cooperators: food sharing in humans and other primates. <i>Evolutionary Anthropology</i>, 22:186-195 • Henrich (2015) <i>The Secret of Our Success</i>, Chapters 9, 10 • Apicella, C. L., & Silk, J. B. (2019). The evolution of human cooperation. <i>Current Biology</i>, 29(11), R447-R450.
Class 7	Thursday (4/13/2023)	<p>Sexual Selection, Mating Psychology, and the Evolution of Homosexuality: What is it about the fundamentals of sexual reproduction that leads to such differences between males and females? Why are there sexes at all? How does an evolutionary approach illuminate the mating strategies and preferences of males and females? Why is mating among close family members so rare? Why is homosexuality an evolutionary puzzle and how has it been addressed?</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Puts (2010). Beauty and the beast: mechanisms of sexual selection. <i>Evolution and Human Behavior</i> 31, 157-175 • Andersson (1994) <i>Sexual Section</i> Chapter 1: The Theory of Sexual Selection • Savolainen, V., & Hodgson, J. A. (2021). Evolution of homosexuality. <i>Encyclopedia of evolutionary psychological science</i>, 2525-2532. <p>Film:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The evolution of human mating</i> (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OXQwtTONLvg&ab_channel=TED)

		<i>xTalks</i>)
Class 8	Thursday (4/20/2023)	<p>War, Violence, and the Evolution of Magic and Religion</p> <p>Is war unique to humans? Is it a product of natural selection? What are the major types of aggression and how do they differ in their evolution? Why do people believe in gods, devils, demons and aliens? Why do people in nearly all societies participate in religious rituals? How can we explain religion from an evolutionary perspective?</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gat A. 2015. Proving communal warfare among hunter-gatherers: the Quasi-Rousseauan Error. <i>Evolutionary Anthropology</i>, 24:111–126. • Daly (2016). Interpersonal Conflict and Violence. In D. Buss (Ed.), <i>The Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology</i> (Vol. 1, pp. 669-683). • Purzycki, B. G., Apicella, C., Atkinson, Q. D., Cohen, E., McNamara, R. A., Willard, A. K., . . . Henrich, J. (2016). Moralistic gods, supernatural punishment and the expansion of human sociality. <i>Nature</i>, 530: 327-330. • Hong, Z. (2022). A cognitive account of manipulative sympathetic magic. <i>Religion, Brain & Behavior</i>, 12(3), 254-270.