

Psychology 602 Evolutionary Psychology

Required Textbook: Gaulin, S.J. and McBurney, D.H. (2004) *Evolutionary Psychology*, 2nd Ed., Prentice Hall

There will be many additional readings posted on the course Sakai site

Prerequisites: Psychology 101

Course Description: Evolutionary psychology represents a major shift in how psychologists think about the human mind and behavior. This shift was actually predicted by Charles Darwin back in the 1850's, but has only come to meaningful fruition during the past 20 or so years. The field is still in its infancy and there is much to explore and discover. In this course we will be exploring many familiar aspects of human functioning through an evolutionary lens. Many of the topics will be familiar (sensation and perception, cognition, motivation, etc.) but the questions we ask will be different—"Why have we evolved to think, see, taste, think and behave in the ways that we do?" "What functions do (did) the various components of what we consider "human nature" serve?" This course will push us to think in ways that are outside of our natural tendencies and habits of thought. We will have to think of humans as one of many species inhabiting this planet, subject to the same natural laws as algae and aardvarks, plants and platypi.

The course will begin with an overview of the principles of evolution and history of the human race. We will then proceed to examine specific aspects of human functioning through an evolutionary lens. This course will be highly participatory in nature. It will not follow the traditional format of the instructor being the expert and disseminating knowledge to the students who will memorize the information. The students will take an active role in learning and teaching their fellow students about what it is they're learning about. Students looking for a course where they can have a more passive role or can get away with multiple absences should seek another course.

Goals: By the end of this course students should have a good grasp of the mechanisms of evolution and how those mechanisms operate on the development of the human animal. You will have gained a good deal of practice applying evolutionary principles to understanding various aspects of human nature, and should be able to make novel applications of these principles to aid in understanding the distal causes of much of the human activity that you see around you.

Schedule

Dates	Topic	Readings
August 19-21	Introduction,Overview	G&McB Ch 1
August 24-31	Basic Principles	G&McB Ch 2,DeWaal,Pagel
September 2-4	Consumer behavior and Fear	Gardner Ch 1&2, Miller Ch 6
September 9	Reading Group #1	TBA
September 11	Genetics	G&McB Ch 3
September 14-16	Sensation and Perception	G&McB Ch 4
September 18	Exam 1	
September 21	Consciousness	G&McB Ch5
September 23-28	Motivation and Emotion	G&McB Ch 6, Pinker Ch 15, Keltner Ch 7
September 25	Reading Group #2	TBA
September 30-October 9	Learning and Cognition	G&McB Ch 7,8
October 5	Reading Group#3	TBA
October 12-21	Mating	G&McB Ch 12, Baker Ch 1-3,Ryan and Jetha Ch 3,17-19, Miller Ch 7-8
October 23	Exam 2	
October 26	Reading Group #4	TBA
October 28-November 4	Social Relations	G&McB Ch14, Pinker Ch 17
November 2	Reading Group #5	TBA
November 6-20	Religion and Ethics	Wade Ch 1-3,12;Bering 6-7,Wright appendix
November 16	Reading Group #6	
November 9	Individual Presentations 1	
November 13	Individual Presentations 2	
November 18	Individual Presentations 3	
November 18	Papers due	
November 23	Individual Presentations 4	
November 30	Individual Presentations 5	
December 2	Last Day of Class Reflection and wrap-up	
December 7	Final Exam 12 noon	

*****Please note that this schedule is tentative and subject to change as the semester evolves. Changes will be announced in class. It is your responsibility to be present and attentive so that you aware of any revisions.**

Grading: Your grade for the course will be based upon the following factors

Exams	150, 150, 200 points
Term Paper	250 points
Individual Presentation of Term Paper	50 points
Attendance and Participation	100 points
Reading Groups	100 points

Exams: There will be 2 in-class exams during the semester and a final exam. The exams will likely include both multiple-choice and short answer type questions.

Attendance and Participation: Attending all class meetings and remaining attentive is expected, perfect attendance will result in 50 points being awarded here. The remaining 50 points will be earned through actively asking and answering questions in class. Actively participating in the Reading Group discussions is expected, but will not be counted toward this portion of your grade-it will be graded separately. There will also be an “Evolutionary Psychology Watch” discussion Forum on Sakai. Students who actively participate on this discussion forum may have that participation counted toward their participation grade.

Term Paper: Your term paper will have 3 main components. First, you should find a scientific study relevant to Evolutionary Psychology you find interesting. Summarize the study and comment on the author’s methodology, conclusions, and implications of the study. Find a second article that either supports or calls into question the conclusions of the first; describe and comment. Then, design your own study that would either support or refute the findings of the studies you reviewed. You do not have to actually carry out the study, just describe in detail how you would do it. For your own study design, you can assume that you have unlimited financial resources but design your study in such a way that it could actually be carried out using technology that currently exists (e.g. no time-travel machines). **All papers are due on November 18th** (regardless of when you’re scheduled to present). There will be a 5 point per day deduction for late papers (Saturday and Sunday will count as one day). No papers will be accepted after the last day of class.

Individual Presentation: You will briefly (5-6 minutes) report to the class on the studies that you reviewed and your own proposed experiment and will respond to questions/comments from the class (1-2 minutes). Students will present in alphabetical order of their last names. See syllabus for presentation dates, which date you’re assigned will be posted after classes start.

Reading groups: The class will be divided into 6 groups which will work together periodically during the semester on discussing specific articles picked out by their peers. Each group will be responsible for picking out one or two articles for the entire class to read and discuss. Within each group there will specific roles and assignments for each group member related to each article selected (see below). This assignment will be discussed in greater detail in class. The grade for this

portion of the class will be based upon the students' level of participation in their group, as judged by the Instructor and anonymous peer ratings; as well as the quality of the written assignments submitted.

Reading Roles

Discussion Leader. Develop at least **three possible discussion questions** that can help everyone understand the main points of the assigned reading. Don't worry about the small details. Your task is to help people talk over the big ideas in the reading and to share reactions to the text. Be prepared with your own brief answers to your questions. You will also be responsible for facilitating the group discussion. You will need to turn in at least three discussion questions with your own brief answers. If there is more than one reading, you will need to include at least two discussion questions per reading.

Passage Master. Locate a **few special passages that are important** in the reading assignment. These may give key information, back up the information given, or summarize the author's key points. They might also be passages that strike your fancy for some reason, are particularly well written, or might be controversial or contradictory with other passages or other information learned in class. You will need to turn in at least two important passages per reading, including a summary of the passage in everyday terminology (in other words, how you would explain the passage to your roommate), and an explanation of why you think the passage is important.

Creative Connector. Help everyone **make connections to other important ideas**, both to ideas from this class and also to other cultural, social, political, and economic ideas. You may make connections to other reading assignments, lectures, TV shows, movies, or other experiences. You will need to turn in at least two connections, including a summary of the connections and discussion questions to help others make the connections themselves.

Devil's Advocate. Challenge the ideas in the article by developing a list of critical, **thoughtful questions and arguments that might be raised by critics** of the authors or by those with different points of view. You will need to turn in at least two challenging questions or arguments, including a brief explanation of why you are making this critique. If there is more than one reading, you should have at least one challenging question per reading.

Reporter. The reporter is the only role that will be prepared during and after class. Your job is twofold. First, during the discussion, you will **take notes on the discussion and will summarize its main points**. Be certain to also participate in the discussion! You are not tasked with acting as a scribe who tries to furiously write down what everyone says. Rather, you will act as a meta-discussion observer, looking for any areas of confusion or disagreement, which you can bring up for discussion. Second, after the discussion you will need to write a **brief summary of the group discussion**. Address such questions as: What did you discuss? What did you agree/disagree on? What readings or ideas did the

group find most interesting or controversial? In general, how did the discussion go? Was it beneficial? You will need to turn in your report of the group discussion (described above). This will be due at the following class meeting.