

ANTHROPOLOGY 342.01 (13553)

Human Behavior and Evolution

Fall 2024

TR 9:25-10:40, ECTR 113

Dr. Hector Qirko

Office Hours: MW 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.,

TR 1:45-2:45, and by appointment

88 Wentworth, room 105

(843) 953-5738 (dept.)

qirkoh@cofc.edu

Course description

“People are animals,” Darwinian anthropologist Laura Betzig claimed, and so our behavior is to some degree properly subject to evolutionary explanations. But is this true? Haven’t our intelligence, consciousness and, above all, capacity for culture created a difference in kind, and not just degree, between us and other species on the earth? Wasn’t Alfred Kroeber right when he characterized culture as “extra-somatic” and “superorganic?” Are we unduly reducing humanity when we appeal to evolutionary theory to explain it, or are we unduly privileging humans by divorcing them from the processes that have given rise to all other living things?

This course explores the degree to which Darwinian evolutionary theory might inform aspects of human behavior that in anthropology have generally been understood as primarily cultural. It is designed to present an overview of the use of evolutionary theory in anthropology (meaning primarily cultural anthropology, but including some archaeology), as well as to evaluate some relevant evolutionary-minded literature from other fields (biology, psychology, philosophy, economics) for its applicability to anthropological inquiry. Throughout, research on specific areas of human behavior will be used to illustrate and test theoretical models, and the final section of the course will focus on some of these areas in more detail.

General course objectives- To examine, through readings, links, video, discussion, and research:

- fundamental evolutionary concepts and models as applied (or misapplied) in the study of human cultural behavior;
- specific domains of human behavior (e.g., mate choice, parenting, warfare, religious and moral systems, art, etc.) and evolutionary-minded research in those domains; and
- important debates (e.g., reductionism, levels of selection, "pure" altruism, the demographic transition, etc.) in the application of evolutionary theory to human cultural behavior.

Specific student learning outcomes- You should:

- learn the three main approaches to the evolutionary analysis of human behavior—human behavioral ecology, evolutionary psychology, and gene-culture coevolution;
- be able to critique evolutionary research on specific human behavioral domains from the perspective of one or more of the three main approaches, as well as from more traditional anthropological theory;
- understand major debates concerning the relevance of evolutionary theory to understanding human cultural behavior; and
- improve critical thinking, effective writing, and oral discussion skills.

Course structure

Class periods will consist of lectures, discussion of topics, readings, links, and occasional video.

Graded work

Exam I	20%
Exam II	20%
Exam III	20%
Research project	30%
Participation	10%

Grade scale

A 92-100%; A- 90-91; B+ 88-89; B 82-87; B- 80-81; C+ 78-79; C 72-77; C- 70-71; D+ 68-69; D 62-67; D- 60-61; F 59 or below.

Readings

All readings will be available through our OAKS course site; assigned readings in pdfs and links should be completed **prior** to assigned dates (see course outline and links list below it).

Exams (20% each, on 9/24, 10/17, 12/6)

There will be three in-class, medium-length identification/essay exams designed to ensure course engagement and understanding of materials covered in the lectures, readings, links and other additional materials, and class discussion. In addition to fundamental terms, concepts and illustrations, you will be expected to identify specific research as discussed in the course. Study guides will be provided prior to each exam. Exams missed due to excused and documented absences can be made-up on 12/3 (Reading Day) at 10:00 a.m., location TBA. You **must** contact me prior to that date if you plan on taking a make-up exam.

Research project (30%- see below for due dates for each graded step)

In addition, you will conduct library research on a particular area of interest for a research paper. A topic choice, including 3-5 citations of preliminary sources, should be submitted for approval no later than 10/1 (10% of project grade). Topics must in some sense explore the intersection of cultural patterning and evolutionary-minded research. Project materials (notes/drafts) are due no later than 11/7 (10% of project grade). However, drafts may also be submitted for ungraded feedback at any time up to two days prior to final paper due date. Final research papers (due 11/26) should be 10-12 pages of text in length (12 pt font, double spaced), plus however many pages of references are necessary.

Class participation

Class engagement and participation are essential for success in this course, as much of the material on exams will stem directly from lectures, films, and class discussion. Your participation grade will be based on general attendance, engagement, and discussion (5% of course grade), as well as a presentation of your research project at the end of the semester (5% of course grade). While daily attendance will not be taken, you are responsible for all information disseminated and discussed in the course. If you must miss a class, obtain notes from classmates and feel free to email or meet with me to go over them prior to the relevant exam. I will not provide lecture notes, although I will post assignment guidelines, power points, links, exam study guides, etc. as relevant.

For absences that require documentation (exam and assignment due dates, as well as extended absences related to health, personal or emergency situations), please note that you are responsible for documenting and reporting reasons for absences by email or in person. Also remember that the [Student Health Office](#) is always available as needed.

Special needs

If you have (or think you might have) a documented disability that may impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, contact an administrator at the [Center of Disability Services](#) (email: snap@cofc.edu; phone: 843-953-1431; location: Lightsey Center 104). Accommodations will require a Professor Notification letter (PNL) from you and will be approved early in the semester and not during or after exam periods or assignment due dates. Please feel free to discuss related issues with me at any time during office hours or by appointment. Additionally, whether or not you have a documented disability, let me know about anything that can make navigating and learning course materials easier for you.

Self-care and finding a healthy life-college balance

Keeping life, school, and often work in balance can be difficult. This [site](#) provides resources to help with some of the many issues that can come up. Also always feel free to discuss with me if you want additional input.

Honor code

Violations of the honor code will be taken seriously. If you need reminding, you can find the complete code and all related processes in the [Student Handbook](#). Obviously, lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that, when suspected, are investigated. Any acts of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported to the Office of the Dean of Students and addressed through the conduct process.

However, as plagiarism is sometimes an unintentional infraction, I strongly recommend that you read [MLA's Academic Integrity Guide](#) and/or watch this University of Wisconsin [tutorial video](#) to make sure you know what errors to avoid. Don't hesitate to contact me with any doubts or questions you may have regarding this issue.

Inclement Weather or other substantial interruptions

If in-person classes are suspended, I will let you know as soon as possible my plan to keep the class going. Whatever that entails, you will need a computer equipped with internet access.

Additional resources

Any problems with any aspect of the course, don't hesitate to meet with me. Also, there are many good online articles on critical skills that can help you navigate this course and others. For example:

[Critical/objective thinking](#)

[Active reading](#)

[Critical reading](#)

[Effective writing](#)

And don't forget the Writing Lab in the [Center for Student Learning](#) (Addlestone Library, first floor). Trained writing consultants can help with writing for all courses; they offer one-to-one consultations that address everything from brainstorming and developing ideas to crafting strong sentences and documenting sources. For more information, call 843.953.5635.

As members of the College of Charleston community, we affirm, embrace and hold ourselves accountable to the core values of integrity, academic excellence, liberal arts education, respect for the individual student, diversity, equity and inclusion, student centeredness, innovation and public mission.

COURSE OUTLINE

(Subject to revision; assigned **readings** are stored on our OAKS page by author last name and year of publication- note that Laland & Brown 2011, from which we will use several chapters, is referred to as L&B. Assigned **links** are found below this outline)

Basics:

- 8/20 introduction to course
- 8/22 introduction to topic: people are animals (or are we?) [Betzig 97; L&B chpt 1]
- 8/27 evolution(s)- genes, memes [Tibell & Harms 17; Brown 96; Link 1]
- 8/29 selection [Endler 92; Low 96; Link 2]
- 9/3 fitness, reproductive success [Ramsey & de Block 15]
- 9/5 adaptation [Link 3; Irons 96; Williams 66]
- 9/10 neo-Darwinian “altruism”- inclusive fitness [Stewart Williams 07, Link 4]
- 9/12 n-D “altruism”- reciprocity [Theelen & Bohm 16; Nowak & Sigmund 05; Mujcic & Leibrandt 18]
- 9/17 n-D “altruism”- costly signaling [Zahavi & Zahavi 97; Soler 12]
- 9/19 pure altruism? special case theories [Link 5; Link 6, parts 1 and 2]
- 9/24 **Exam 1**

The three main approaches:

- 9/26 human behavioral ecology 1 [L&B chpt 4, Caro & Borgerhoff Mulder 87]
- 10/1 human behavioral ecology 2 [Cronk 89; Rodriguez et al 19
research topic choice due!]
- 10/3 evolutionary psychology 1 [L&B chpt 5; Schmitt & Pilcher 04]
- 10/8 evolutionary psychology 2 [Link 7; Guthrie 95]
- 10/10 dual inheritance/new group selection 1 [L&B chpt 7; Dennett 91]
- 10/15 dual inheritance/new group selection 2 [Link 8; Whitehead et al 19]

10/17	Exam 2	
	Specific research areas:	
10/22	mating	[Fisher 87; Link 9; Apostolou 07]
10/24	language	[Pinker 03; Smith 06]
10/29	parenting	[Geary 07, Mace 16]
10/31	kinship	[Surowiec et al 19; Qirko 13]
11/5	No class- fall break	
11/7	morality	[Krebs & Denton 13; Haidt 03 research draft/notes due]
11/12	cooperation	[Boyd & Richerson 09; Tooby & Cosmides 16]
11/14	aggression	[Glowacki et al 17; Link 10]
11/19	arts	[Miller 01; Dissanayake 11]
11/21	discussion of research projects 1	
11/26	discussion of research projects 2	[research papers due]
11/28	No class- Thanksgiving	
12/3	Reading Day	
12/6	Exam 3 (10:30 am-12:30 pm)	

NOTE: Final exam day/time may not be changed unless you have too many exams scheduled on the same day (as defined by the College).

LINKS

1. **Competition between genes and memes (Heylighen 1994)**
<http://pespmc1.vub.ac.be/MEMGEN.html>
2. **Evolution & Natural Selection, Anthropologically! (Antrosio 2011)**
<https://www.livinganthropologically.com/biological-anthropology/evolution-natural-selection/>
3. **Adaptation: biology and physiology (Gittleman 2019)**
<https://www.britannica.com/science/adaptation-biology-and-physiology>
4. **Cultural inclusive fitness? (Birch 2017)**

- <http://philosophyofbrains.com/2017/11/03/5-cultural-inclusive-fitness.aspx>
5. **How are humans unique? (Tomasello 2008)**
<https://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/25/magazine/25wwln-essay-t.html>
 6. **The traits that make human beings unique (Hogenboom 2015)**
<http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20150706-the-small-list-of-things-that-make-humans-unique>
 7. **How evolution designed your fear (Clasen 2017)**
<http://nautil.us/issue/53/monsters/how-evolution-designed-your-fear>
 8. **Gene-culture coevolution and human diet (Arjaama & Vuorisalo 2010)**
<https://www.americanscientist.org/article/gene-culture-coevolution-and-human-diet>
 9. **What have you changed your mind about? Why? (Fisher 2008)**
<https://www.edge.org/response-detail/11507>
 10. **It's Not All Sex and Violence (Fuentes 2014 – Video 12.27 min)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=66leDfeGbZA>