

Evolutionary Psychology

PSYC 358, Section 002

(2019-2020 Academic Year, Term 1)

Course website: <http://www2.psych.ubc.ca/~schaller/psyc358.htm>

When: Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00 – 3:20

Where: Chemistry D300

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Course Objectives and Overview:

Evolutionary psychology is a broad approach to scientific inquiry, in which the knowledge and principles from evolutionary biology are applied to the study of human psychological processes and their implications for human behavior. This course is designed to provide you with a good overview of the basic themes of inquiry within evolutionary psychology, and an overview of important programs of research within evolutionary psychology.

By the end of the course, you should understand how evolutionary thinking can be productively applied within the psychological sciences, you should be familiar with the conceptual and methodological issues that arise when evolutionary principles are applied to the study contemporary human behavior, and you should know a wide variety of psychological theories and psychological phenomena that have emerged within the framework of evolutionary psychology.

This is a big class, and I will present a lot of material in a lecture format. But please don't let that keep you from thinking; I'll try as best as I can to keep you alert and mentally active in class. Please feel free to ask questions and/or make cogent comments during class.

The material that appears in the readings and the material that I present in class are designed to be complementary. There will be some overlap, of course. But there is lots of material in the readings that we won't have time to talk about in class; and I will present lots of material in class that doesn't appear in the readings. If you want to do well in this class, be sure to keep up with the readings, and be sure to come to class.

Required Reading Material:

I will *not* be using any standard textbook for this course. Instead, the readings include a single classic popular-press book, and a large collection of scientific articles. These readings are available to you electronically (for free!) on the class website.

The book is: *The Selfish Gene*, by Richard Dawkins. It was originally published in 1976, by Oxford University Press, and several updated editions of the book have been published since then. For this course, it doesn't matter which edition you read; we will cover material common to all editions. The "30th Anniversary edition" of *The Selfish Gene*—the whole book—is available to you on the class website, in the form of a pdf file. (You don't need to buy a hardcopy; but if you do want to, it is readily buy-able from many bookstores, or order-able online.)

In addition, I have assembled a set of scholarly articles that correspond to the topics that we will be covering. (Most of these articles were published in the journal *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, which publishes short and not-too-painful-to-read review articles on psychological research topics.) All of the articles—in the form of pdf files—are available on the class website.

All readings can be accessed via the list of assigned readings that you'll find within the "Calendar of Events" at the end of this syllabus. This "Calendar of Events" is also posted separately on the course website. Each reading listed contains a link that will connect you to the reading itself (the relevant pdf file on the course website). These readings are password-protected. To access them you'll need to use the following course-specific user name and password: user name = 358; password = *evolutionary*.

Course Website:

I'll be making a variety of course-relevant materials available on a course website that I have created: <http://www2.psych.ubc.ca/~schaller/psyc358.htm>.

On that website, you will find the electronic version of this syllabus (which may be updated as needed) as well as a variety of additional materials that you may find helpful. These materials will include abbreviated versions of my lecture slides. (These slides contain key pieces of information presented in lectures, but they certainly don't

contain everything that I will present in class. So if you miss a class, you would be wise to make arrangements to get class notes from one or more other students in the class.) These materials will also include a list of “Things that Matter Most” in the readings and lecture materials—which is designed to help you distinguish between high-priority information and less essential information in the readings and lectures.

I will post grades on the course website. Those postings will be password-protected. In order to access them, you will need to provide a user name and password—the same user name and password that also provide you with access to the required readings (see above).

Assessments of Learning – Exams:

There will be three exams. The first (Midterm Exam 1) will be on *Tuesday, October 1*. The second (Midterm Exam 2) will be on *Tuesday, November 5*. The third (Final Exam) will be held during the final exam period, on a *date to be determined later*.

Your performance on each exam will count 30% toward your final course grade.

Each exam will consist primarily of multiple-choice items, and will also include a small number of short-answer items. The exams are *not* designed in any explicit way to be cumulative; each exam will focus on “new” material presented in readings and lectures since any previous exam. (Of course, a lot of “new” material builds upon older material, and your comprehension of new material will be increased if you have retained your knowledge of that older material.)

Exams won't be handed back to you. Students at UBC have the right to view their marked examinations with their instructor, providing they apply to do so within a month of receiving their final grades. This review is for pedagogic purposes. The examination remains the property of the university.

If you miss a scheduled exam you will receive a mark of “0” for that exam. The only exception would be if an event outside of your control—such as an acute health issue—prevents you from taking the exam as scheduled. If such a circumstance arises, you must let me know as soon as possible and, ideally, provide me with credible written documentation attesting to the event outside of your control. I will adhere to relevant UBC policies to determine the appropriate course of action. **Please make sure that you're familiar with those policies—on “academic concession”—which are linked here.**

Assessments of Learning – Essay Assignment:

There will be one essay-writing assignments. For this essay assignment, I will provide a specific topic for you to address in writing, in the form of a short paper. The essay assignment is designed to help you think about, and integrate, the material covered in this course. The essay assignment is also designed to provide you with an opportunity to show off your knowledge of (and deep thinking about) the material covered in this course. Essays will be marked according to how accurately, how convincingly, and how thoroughly they use course material to address the assigned topic. The essay assignment—along with a more detailed set of guidelines—is posted separately on the course website.

Your performance on the essay assignment will count 10% toward your final course grade.

This essay is due on *Thursday, November 21*, at the start of class. That is the final deadline for handing in the essay. (You may hand it in any time before that deadline.) I will not accept essays that are handed in after the deadline; if your essay isn't handed in by the deadline, you will receive mark of "0" for the essay assignment. (The only exception to the preceding rule would be if an unanticipated event outside of your control—such as an acute health issue—prevents you from handing in the essay by the deadline. If such a circumstance arises, you must let me know as soon as possible and, ideally, provide me with credible written documentation attesting to the unanticipated event outside of your control. I will adhere to [relevant UBC policies](#) to determine the appropriate course of action.)

Scaling of Grades:

Grades will be scaled in order to maintain equity among sections and to conform to University, Faculty, or Department grading norms. In accordance with the policy of the Psychology Department, the expectation is that the final grades in this course (as in all 300-level courses) will be normally distributed around an average grade of approximately 68 (i.e., right around a C+ or B-).

Let me explain what this is all about. The primary function of grades is to inform you (and other people) as to your performance relative to other students taking the course. In order for grades to serve this function, it's important that average performance is reflected in an average grade, that better-than-average-but-not-great performance is reflected in a better-than-average-but-not-great grade, and so forth. The Psychology Department has explicit guidelines for appropriate distributions of grades in courses at all levels, and this course will follow those guidelines—which means that approximately half the students in this class will receive final grades in the A or B range, and approximately half will receive final grades in the C, D, or F range.

Let me make this point in a slightly different way. Don't be fooled by the fact that UBC records numerical grades on a 100-point scale. These numerical grades aren't really

percentages. They are simply numerical translations of letter grades. Again: The purpose of your final course grade is to reflect your performance in this course relative to the other students taking the course. If your performance is right in the middle of the overall grade distribution, then you'll get an average grade (a C+ or B-). If most students in class perform better than you, you'll get a low grade (in the low C's, or D's or—if you're way at the bottom of the grade distribution—an F). If you perform better than average, then you'll get a better-than-average grade (e.g., a B perhaps). And if you perform way better than average (e.g., if your performance is among the top 15%-20% of students in the entire class) then you may get an A.

Anyway, please remember that final grades will be scaled to ensure that the distribution of final grades meets Psychology Department guidelines. (I'll help you remember: When I provide feedback on exams and essays, I will provide you with information about your performance relative to other students in the class.)

Special Accommodations:

UBC accommodates students with disabilities who have registered with UBC's [Centre for Accessibility](#). If you have a disability that may affect your performance in this class, please make sure you have contacted the Centre for Accessibility to arrange for accommodations. Please let me know of these accommodations as soon as possible.

UBC also accommodates students whose religious obligations conflict with attendance, assignments, or examinations. Please let me know as soon as possible—and well in advance of any assignment or examination—if you will require any accommodation on these grounds.

The university does not have any formal policy on accommodating students who plan to be absent for varsity athletics, family obligations, or other similar commitments. So, please do not assume that you will get special accommodations for these sorts of absences. It is your responsibility to ensure that you meet the course requirements as scheduled. If you do plan to be absent during any time an examination is scheduled, please discuss this with me as soon as possible.

Class conduct:

Please show up on time and please don't leave early, because comings and goings during class are very disruptive. Make sure cellphones and other distracting electronic stuff are turned off before you come to class. And please don't chatter when I'm lecturing or if someone else is talking. I do want you to actively participate in the class—to ask questions and make comments—but please do so in respectful way.

Equity and Inclusion and Diversity and Respect:

Our classroom is a place that should be conducive to learning and rigorous intellectual inquiry. It's also a place where everyone should feel included and respected—regardless of race, ethnicity, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, political or religious affiliations, ability, age, social status, etc. All students in this class are encouraged to speak up and participate during class meetings; and, when you do express yourself in class, it's important that you do so in a manner that shows respect for every other member of this class. (Please make sure that you're familiar with [UBC's policy on building and maintaining a respectful environment; you'll find it linked here.](#))

Some course content may introduce topics that could be perceived to be controversial or sensitive; in talking about these topics it will be especially important for us all to express ourselves in a thoughtful, nonjudgmental, and socially responsible manner. Of course, people aren't perfect and slip-ups are possible (e.g., someone might say something that is perceived by someone else to be insensitive); and it's important to respond to those slip-ups in a responsible manner too. If something is expressed by someone—whether it's by me, a TA, a fellow student, or an author of one of the readings for this course—that you perceive to violate these goals of equity and inclusion and diversity and universal respect, I encourage you to bring it to my attention in whatever way you feel most comfortable doing so. (You can let me know directly, or you can do so anonymously—for instance by asking a third party to relay a message to me.) By doing so, you will be doing a good deed by helping to educate other people (including me!) and by promoting an inclusive educational environment.

Academic Dishonesty:

Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic misconduct are very serious concerns of the University, and the Department of Psychology has taken steps to alleviate them. The Department has implemented software that can reliably detect cheating on multiple-choice exams by analyzing the patterns of students' responses. The Department also subscribes to TurnItIn—a service designed to detect and deter plagiarism. All materials that students submit for grading will be scanned and compared to over 4.5 billion pages of content located on the Internet or in TurnItIn's own proprietary databases. The results of these comparisons are compiled into customized "Originality Reports" containing several, sensitive measures of plagiarism; instructors receive copies of these reports for every student in their class. In all cases of suspected academic misconduct, the parties involved will be pursued to the fullest extent dictated by the guidelines of the University. Strong evidence of cheating or plagiarism may result in a zero credit for the work in question. According to the University Act (section 61), the President of UBC has the right to impose harsher penalties including (but not limited to)

a failing grade for the course, suspension from the University, cancellation of scholarships, or a notation added to a student's transcript.

All graded work in this course, unless otherwise specified, is to be original work done independently by individuals. If you have any questions as to whether or not what you are doing is even a borderline case of academic misconduct, please consult your instructor. For details on University policies and procedures pertaining to student conduct and academic dishonesty, please see the [Academic Calendar](#).

Other Stuff:

This syllabus is our roadmap for the course, but it is possible that some revisions (in scheduling, in policy, etc.) may have to be made as we work our way through the material. Any announcements made in class "count" just as much as policies outlined in this written syllabus.

Further information about academic regulations, course withdrawal dates and credits can be found in the [Academic Calendar](#).

If you run into trouble and need information about studying, preparing for exams, note-taking or time-management, free workshops and advice are available from various resources around campus, such as the [UBC Learning Commons](#).

Calendar of Events:

Following is an overview of the structure of the course, along with a list of the dates on which we will have classes. For each class, I've indicated exactly what material you should have completed reading by that date.

Introduction to the course

Tuesday, Sept. 3: CLASS IS CANCELLED (UBC "Imagine" day)

[For information about "Imagine" events in Psychology, go [here](#)]

Thursday, Sept. 5: Introduction to "Evolutionary Psychology"

Reading: Course syllabus (which you'll find on the [course website](#))

Tuesday, Sept. 10: Logical principles underlying evolutionary psychology

Reading: [Cosmides, L., & Tooby, J. \(1997\). *Evolutionary psychology: A primer*. Center for Evolutionary Psychology; University of California, Santa Barbara.](#)

Reading: Confer, J. C., Easton, J. A., Fleischman, D. S., Goetz, C. D., Lewis, D. G. M., Perilloux, C., & Buss, D. M. (2010). Evolutionary psychology: Controversies, questions, prospects, and limitations. *American Psychologist*, 65, 110–126.

Part 1: Gene's-eye view of human cognition and behavior

Thursday, Sept. 12: The gene's-eye view of life

Reading: [Dawkins, Chapters 1 and 2](#)

Tuesday, Sept. 17: Good genes

Reading: [Dawkins, Chapter 3](#)

Reading: [Gangestad, S. W., Thornhill, R. & Garver-Apgar, C. E. \(2005\). *Adaptations to ovulation: Implications for sexual and social behavior. Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 14, 312-316.](#)

Thursday, Sept. 19: Adapted cognition

Reading: [Dawkins, Chapter 4](#)

Reading: [Nairne, J. S., & Pandeirada, J. N. S. \(2008\). Adaptive memory: Remembering with a stone-age brain. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 17, 239-243.](#)

Tuesday, Sept. 24: The social context of adapted cognition

Reading: [Dawkins, Chapter 5](#)

Reading: [Dunbar, R. I. M. \(2014\). The social brain: Psychological underpinnings and implications for the structure of organizations. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 23, 109–114.](#)

Thursday, Sept. 26: Inclusive fitness and its implications

Reading: [Dawkins, Chapter 6](#)

Tuesday, Oct. 1: MIDTERM EXAM 1

Part 2: Psychological adaptations pertaining to survival and sexual reproduction

Thursday, Oct. 3: Looking back

[No new readings assigned]

Tuesday, Oct. 8: Looking forward (Evolution and motivation)

Reading: [Schaller, M., Kenrick, D.T., Neel, R., & Neuberg, S.L. \(2017\). Evolution and human motivation: A fundamental motives framework. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 11, e12319.](#)

Reading: [Kenrick \(2016\). Rate yourself on the new motivational pyramid: A new scale of fundamental evolved motives \[blog post\]. \[www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/sex-murder-and-the-meaning-life/201604/rate-yourself-the-new-motivational-pyramid\]\(http://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/sex-murder-and-the-meaning-life/201604/rate-yourself-the-new-motivational-pyramid\)](#)

Thursday, Oct. 10: Better safe than sorry (Error management)

Reading: [Öhman, A., & Mineka, S. \(2003\). The malicious serpent: Snakes as a prototypical stimulus for an evolved module of fear. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 12, 5-9.](#)

Reading: [Zebrowitz, L. A. \(2017\). First impressions from faces. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 26, 237-242.](#)

Tuesday, Oct. 15: The behavioral immune system

Reading: [Schaller, M., & Park, J. H. \(2011\). The behavioral immune system \(and why it matters\). *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 20, 99-103.](#)

Thursday, Oct. 17: Parental (and grandparental) investment

Reading: [Dawkins, Chapters 7 and 8](#)

Tuesday, Oct. 22: Parental investment and sex differences in sexual behavior

Reading: [Dawkins, Chapter 9](#)

Reading: [Schmitt, D. P., Jonason, P. K., Byerley, G. J., Flores, S. D., Illbeck, B. E., O'Leary, K. N., & Qudrat, A. \(2012\). A reexamination of sex differences in sexuality: New studies reveal old truths. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 21, 135-139.](#)

Thursday, Oct. 24: Mate preferences

Reading: [Bjorklund, D. F. & Shackelford, T. K. \(1999\). Differences in parental investment contribute to important differences between men and women. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 8, 86-89.](#)

Reading: [Fink, B. & Penton-Voak, I. \(2002\). Evolutionary psychology of facial attractiveness. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 11, 154-158.](#)

Tuesday, Oct. 29: Choosy women, show-off-y men

Reading: [Buss, D. M. \(2001\). Cognitive biases and emotional wisdom in the evolution of conflict between the sexes. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 10, 219-223.](#)

Reading: [Buss, D. M. \(2017\). Sexual conflict in human mating. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 26, 307–313.](#)

Thursday, Oct. 31: Beyond sexual stereotypes (Focus on female short-term mating)

Reading: [Haselton, M. G., & Gildersleeve, K. \(2011\). Can men detect ovulation? *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 20, 87-91.](#)

Tuesday, Nov. 5: MIDTERM EXAM 2

Part 3: Other challenges, other adaptations, other implications

Thursday, Nov. 7: More kinship (Focus on kin-recognition cues)

Reading: [Daly, M. & Wilson, M. I. \(1996\). Violence against stepchildren. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 5, 77-81.](#)

Reading: [Lieberman, D., & Smith, A. \(2012\). It's all relative: Sexual aversions and moral judgments regarding sex among siblings. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 21, 243–247.](#)

Tuesday, Nov. 12: More parental investment (Focus on psychological mechanisms)

Reading: [Schaller, M. \(2018\). The parental care motivational system and why it matters \(for everyone\). *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 27, 295-301.](#)

Thursday, Nov. 14: Reciprocity and cooperation

Reading: [Dawkins, Chapter 10](#)

Reading: [Delton, A. W., & Robertson, T. E. \(2016\). How the mind makes welfare tradeoffs: Evolution, computation, and emotion. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 7, 12-16.](#)

Tuesday, Nov. 19: Emotions and emotional expressions

Reading: [McCullough, M. E., Kimeldorf, M. B. & Cohen, A. D. \(2008\). An adaptation for altruism? The social causes, social effects, and social evolution of gratitude. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 17, 281-285.](#)

Reading: [Shariff, A. F., & Tracy, J. L. \(2011\). What are emotion expressions for? *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 20, 395-399.](#)

Thursday, Nov. 21: Intergroup conflict

ESSAY ASSIGNMENT IS DUE

[No new readings assigned]

Tuesday, Nov. 26: Evolution and culture

Reading: [Dawkins, Chapter 11](#)

Reading: [Li, N. P., van Vugt, M., & Colarelli, S. M. \(2018\). The evolutionary mismatch hypothesis: Implications for psychological science. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 27, 38-44.](#)

Thursday, Nov. 28: The perils and prospects of evolutionary psychology

Reading: [Schmalor, A., & Heine, S. J. \(2019\). In genes we trust: On the consequences of genetic essentialism. In B. T. Rutjens & M. J. Brandt \(Eds.\), *Belief systems and the perception of reality* \(pp. 138-152\). London: Routledge.](#)

Optional Reading: [Lewis, D. G. M., Al-Shawaf, L., Conroy-Beam, D., Asao, K., & Buss, D. M. \(2017\). Evolutionary psychology: A how-to guide. *American Psychologist*, 72, 353-373.](#)

FINAL EXAM: SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7, 3:30 p.m.
(Place to be determined later.)