

PSYC358

Evolutionary Psychology

Instructor

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Wednesdays 3:30-4:30

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Monday 1-2, Thursdays 11-12

Class Time:

Wednesdays 5-8

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1.0 *The Class:*

It has been just eight generations since our species understood how it got here and how we were made. In that time, the theory of evolution has been denied, reviled, and misused, just as it has been celebrated, refined, and expanded. What it hasn't been is fully societally digested. We have not come to terms with the implications that we—including our hearts and minds—are the products of the blind process of natural selection. Instead of attempting a comprehensive overview of the large field of evolutionary psychology, this course is going to focus on this attempt to digest its biggest implications. As a result, the course will involve extensive group discussion that attempts to wrestle with the most challenging and meaningful questions that emerge from the course material.

1.1 *Class Format:*

The class will have three components:

1. Pre-recorded lectures and texts that you will watch and read at home, in advance of our discussion classes.
2. The first half of our synchronous discussion class, which will involve small group (4 or 5) discussions of a set of Discussion Questions for that week. During this small group discussion time, Nick (your TA) and I may pop in and out to join the conversation for a few minutes at a time—though we won't be able to drop into each group every class.
3. The second half of our synchronous discussion class, which will involve a section-wide discussion of the same set of questions from the small group discussion. (Note that I may try cold-calling students for their thoughts. The goal here is to make sure a broader distribution of the class actively participates in these discussions than what we typically see when relying on people to volunteer to contribute. Though cold-calling can be a bit nerve-wracking for students, it's widely used in business and law schools (and high schools, for that matter), and it will be made easier by the fact that you had just worked out your thinking about these questions with your small group)

The weekly set of Discussion Questions will be pulled from the Discussion Question/Analysis Papers that students submit for that week (see 2.1). Each student will submit one of these at some point during term. It will be based on that week's lectures and readings, and will be submitted the night before our Discussion Class. I will then go through that week's submissions and prepare the ~5 questions that we will discuss. It's not necessary, but in case you want to collect your thoughts about the questions before class time, I will post them on Canvas at 1pm the day of our class.

This is, then, what the timeline will look like:

Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed
Lecture video(s) posted by midnight						Discussion paper due by midnight (see section 2.1)	Discussion Questions posted by 1pm Discussion Class at 5pm or 6:30pm (depending on your section!)

Students preparing the Discussion Paper for that week can start the readings as soon as they are up, but will only have six days from when the lectures are posted to when their papers are due. Luckily the papers are short (3 pages double-spaced)!

1.2 *Class Expectations:*

In order to get the most out of this class, you will be required to not just be intellectually present and attentive during the class discussions, but also open and charitable. What do I mean by that? Given the nature of the class's aims, we will be diving right into deep and sometimes controversial topics. These topics can sometimes challenge preconceptions and received wisdom. I want you to try your best to judge those ideas from a place of openness. Moreover, since we will be discussing these fraught topics together, we need to feel comfortable experimenting with ideas together. It's important that we respect each other, even if we don't agree with (or even respect) each other's ideas. In our discussions, judge people's ideas but resist the urge to judge them. The more we can create this kind of environment, the more open we can be to the most challenging ideas, and the more rewarding the intellectual journey will be.

2.0 Grading:

Discussion Question/Analysis Paper	20 points
Class Attendance	10 points
Discussion Board Participation	10 points
Midterm 1	20 points
Midterm 2	20 points
Final Exam	20 points

2.1 Discussion Question/Analysis Paper (20% of grade):

Each student will sign up to prepare ONE three-page (double-spaced) paper that poses a discussion question of their choosing relating to any topic from the chapter's lecture/reading topic, and then provides an answer to that question.

2.1.1 Importantly, you don't want the discussion question to be a simple factual question that can be quickly answered, e.g.:

- * When did humans and chimpanzees share a common ancestor? Was this later or earlier than our divergence from gorillas?
- * What are three constraints on optimal design?

Instead you want it to be a question that can generate an interesting class-wide discussion, e.g.:

- ✓ In most other species, the males are the decorative sex and the females are visually drab and unremarkable. How come human females tend to invest so heavily in self-decoration?
- ✓ Should we base our institutions on the assumption of evolutionary psychology or is it better to operate under the assumption of social constructivism?
- ✓ Should we research and teach about biological group differences in ability?

I've put several example papers—of varying quality—in a folder in the Files section of Canvas. Do check these out before you write yours!

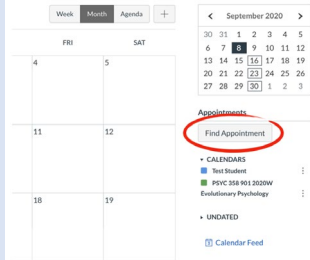
2.1.2 The grading rubric is as follows:

Suitability of Question for Discussion (is your question conducive to provoking interesting class discussion?)	5 points
Knowledge of Material (have you demonstrated an understanding of the material we've covered in lectures and readings?)	5 points
Sophistication of Analysis (have you demonstrated deep thinking about the contours and implications of the question you've asked?)	5 points
Writing Quality (is the presentation of your ideas clear?)	5 points
Total:	20 points

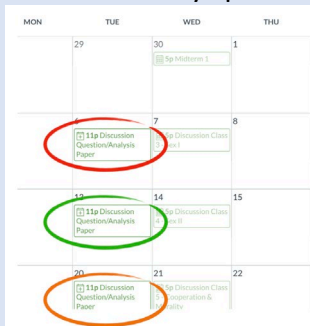
2.1.3 Due Dates and Signing Up: The questions that students come up with for these papers will form the basis of what we talk about in the following class. As a result, it's critical that you get the paper in ON TIME. **Your paper will be due by 11:59pm on the Tuesday immediately preceding that topic's Discussion Class.** For example, if you signed up to do a paper on March 2nd's Cooperation and Morality class, your paper would be due 11:59pm on Tuesday, March 1st.

To sign up for your Discussion Paper topic and date on Canvas do this:

1. On Canvas, choose Calendar on the left sidebar
2. When you get to the calendar, make sure our class is selected on the right sidebar
3. In the right sidebar, click “Find Appointment”



4. Select our class from the pop-up window. This will reveal all the options on the Tuesdays preceding our Discussion Classes



5. Choose the specific date you want (you will be writing on the topic for that Wednesday’s Discussion class), and click “reserve” in the popup window

Important: Since we need students evenly distributed between the various classes, only 20 students can sign up for each day (180 students divided by 9 discussion classes = 20 students each). And since this will be on a first-come-first-served basis, *and* since the first set of 20 students will have their papers due next Tuesday, **please sign up for your slot today!**

2.2 **Class Attendance (10% of grade):**

After the initial intro class, we’ll have 9 Discussion Classes. For each class you attend, you’ll get 1%. If you attend all nine, you’ll get the extra 1% to make the total 10%. If you attend eight, you’ll get 8%. If you attend seven, you’ll get 7%, etc. Attendance will be primarily recorded via Zoom. However, you do need to be present and involved the whole time (it’s only 75 minutes a week), so if, for example, Nick or I drop into your small group discussion and you’re absent, or if I call on you during the class-wide discussion and you’re absent, you’ll unfortunately lose your participation point :-\

2.2.1 Alternative Assignment: The discussion classes are our time to wrestle through the issues and implication that come up from the lectures and readings, and thus serve an important function. However, I recognize that we're in a weird time and there are many reasons why you might need to miss a class or two. In order to try to replace what you'd get in the discussion class, students can submit a shorter, 2-page (double-spaced) version of the Discussion Paper from Section 2.1 for each missed class, on the topic of the class you missed (if you somehow miss the class for which you're scheduled to do your normal Discussion Paper, then you would do both the 3- and 2-page paper). These missed class papers will be scored pass/fail, and passing papers will score you the class attendance point you would otherwise miss. You can upload the papers in the Missed Class Discussion Paper assignment on Canvas.

2.3 Discussion Board Participation (10% of grade):

Since we are missing out on learning together in person, I'm hoping we can have an active community on the discussion boards. The boards can be a venue for students to ask and answer clarification questions on the content we cover. They can also be a place to continue some of the conversations that are generated in class. Often, we won't manage to get to everything and everyone in the 75 minutes a week we get together, so people can post their thoughts and reflections on the boards. In order to incentivize this activity a little bit, a small portion of your term grade will be based on your activity on the boards, according to the following metric:

10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several posts (10 or more) spread across the term • A few "deep and thoughtful" posts • A few helpful answers to other students' questions
8-9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistently posting (at least every other week) • One or two deep posts • A few helpful answers to other students' questions
6-7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few posts throughout the term • No particularly deep posts • Occasional brief answers to other students' questions
3-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rare posts throughout the term • No particularly deep posts • Maybe a brief answer to another student's questions
1-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No particularly thoughtful or helpful posts
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No posts

No need to constantly start your own threads. A thoughtful reply in someone else thread is often as valuable, if not more!

2.4 *Midterms and Final Exam (60% of grade):*

We will have two midterms and a final exam spread throughout the course and administered online. Each student's test will comprise of a random subsample of a larger set of both multiple choice and short answer questions. The midterms will likely be around 60 minutes, and we will use LockDown Browser. I will give you more details closer to the relevant dates.

3.0 *Some Other Stuff*

3.1 *Cheating*

Don't do it. Here's why:

- 3.1.1. It's dishonest, and dishonesty accumulates and weakens you as a person. Every time you do something dishonest like this, it creates a deeper hole that you'll ultimately want to dig yourself out of.
- 3.1.2. It's cheating your fellow classmates. Since the class grades gets scaled to a set average, any unfair *unearned* advantage you claim comes at the expense of someone else's fairly earned accomplishment.
- 3.1.3. You're missing the point of a college education—which is much more about genuine learning, self-mastery, and building your character, than it is about your grade on a damn midterm.
- 3.1.4. I'll catch you.

So, for your own workload, for your classmates, and for your own character, make the one choice, one time, not to engage in misconduct, and then stick to it. You'll be better off for it. Familiarize yourself with UBC's policies on academic dishonesty: <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/Vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,959>

3.2 *Students with Special Needs*

Our university is committed to equal opportunity in education for all students. If you have a documented disability that affects your learning in the classroom or your performance on tests or exams, please contact

Access & Diversity
Brock Hall 1203, 1874 East Mall
604.822.5844

www.students.ubc.ca/access

Students who need extra time for their midterms should contact both Access & Diversity and me by the end of next week (so by our Sep 16th class, as we have our first midterm on Sep 30th!)

If you are an athlete and will be competing during one of the midterms (are athletes still competing?), please let me know well in advance and provide me the contact information for your team's academic advisor.

4.0 *How to Get Help*

4.1 *Help with the Course Material or Local Administrative Issues*

Students often ask how to improve their test scores. One simple answer is that you want to make sure you fully understand the concepts we've discussed in class and readings—making sure that nothing is still fuzzy. So here are four ways you can get clarity on something you're not fully understand:

- 4.1.1: **Ask in class.** You could do this in your small discussion group, as it's likely that one of your partners knows the answer (and would themselves benefit from having to explain it clearly). You can also do it in our class-wide discussion. If you're unclear about something, I can assure you that at least five other students are unclear about it as well. You'll be doing them a favour by bringing it up in class.
- 4.1.2: **Bring it up in a Canvas discussion:** If you don't feel comfortable bringing it up in our weird video-conferenced classes, or don't want to wait until the next class, there are discussion threads on Canvas specifically devoted to asking and answering questions (one for course content, and one for administrative questions). So don't hesitate to post your questions there. It also gives students who know the answer an opportunity to (a) explain it themselves (which can help their own understanding), and (b) get some discussion participation credit (see 2.3).
- 4.1.3: **Come to office hours:** Nick and I will each be holding two office hours outside of class time. These are specifically devoted to answer student questions.
- 4.1.4: **Email Nick or me:** I've left this one last because it is actually the least useful for the class as a whole, since other students typically don't get to see any response. As a result, we may ask if we can move the question and our answer over to one of the discussion boards, where other students can also read them!

4.2 *Help with High-Level Administrative Issues*

For issues such as late withdrawal from classes, applying for academic concession, etc. please **contact Arts Advising:** Information on doing so is here:

<https://students.arts.ubc.ca/advising/contact-us/>

4.3 *Help with mental health and wellness issues:*

Navigating your coursework is hard enough in the best of states. Doing so when dealing with mental or physical health issues, or other adverse circumstances like being the victim of sexual violence, is extremely challenging. Doing so during a pandemic that has limited social supports makes things harder still. Though they do tend to sometimes get pushed to their limits, UBC does have several resources to help you with such struggles. You can read about the university resources available, as well as those available from the larger community here:

<https://students.ubc.ca/health>

Also check out Campus Lightbox, built by your fellow students, that brings together multiple UBC- and community-related wellness resources:
<https://campuslightbox.com>

Take care of yourselves.

5.0 Schedule

	Date	Topic	Readings
0	Jan 12	Intro	<p>→ 1.1 Stewart-Williams (2020). Darwin Comes to Mind. <i>The Ape That Understood the Universe</i>.</p> <p>→ 1.2 Buss et al. (1998). Adaptations, Exaptations & Spandrels. <i>American Psychologist</i></p>
1	Jan 19	Origins: How Life Happened (the first 4 billion years) Darwin's Big Idea (the first 150 years) Simple Mechanics and Complex Dynamics	<p>→ 2.1 Stewart-Williams (2020). Excerpt from Appendix A. <i>The Ape That Understood the Universe</i>.</p> <p>Optional:</p> <p>2.2o Chopra (2007). How Evolutionary Biology Embraces the Bogus. <i>The Huffington Post</i>.</p> <p>2.3o Angier (1999). Men, Women, Sex and Darwin. <i>New York Times</i>.</p>
2	Jan 25	Challenges & Controversies	2.5 Harden (2021). The Science of Terrible Men. <i>Aeon</i> .
M1	Feb 2	MIDTERM 1	<p>3.1 Bjorklund & Shackelford (1999). Differences in Parental Investment Contribute to Important Differences Between Men and Women. <i>Current Directions in Psychological Science</i></p> <p>3.3o Hodes (2018). Evolutionary Origins of Homosexuality. <i>The Gay & Lesbian Review</i></p>
3	Feb 9	Sex I	
4	Feb 16	Sex II	<p>5.1 Christakis (2019). Human Cooperation. <i>Blueprint</i>.</p> <p>5.2 Haidt (2003). The Moral Emotions. <i>Handbook of Affective Sciences</i>.</p>
	Feb 23	Spring Break – No classes	
5	Mar 2	Cooperation and Morality	6.1 Pinker (2011). The Cognitive Niche: Coevolution of intelligence, sociality, and language. <i>Proceedings of the National Academy of Science</i> .
6	Mar 9	Intelligence and Emotion	Study for Midterm!
M2	Mar 16	MIDTERM 2	7.1 Boyd, Richerson & Henrich (2011). The Cultural Niche: Why social learning is essential for human adaptation. <i>Proceedings of the National Academy of Science</i> .
7	Mar 23	Culture: The Human Project I	8.1 PODCAST: Creating God. <i>Hidden Brain (NPR)</i> : https://www.npr.org/2018/07/16/628792048/creating-god
8	Mar 30	Culture: The Human Project II	9.2 VIDEO: Ferguson (2011). The 6 killer apps of prosperity. <i>Ted Talks</i> : https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xpnFeyMGUs8
9	Apr 6	How and Why Civilization Happened	Study for the final!
	Dec 10	FINAL EXAM	