

# PSYC 358: Evolutionary Psychology

(Winter 2023-2024, Term 1 / Sections 001 and 002)

## When and Where:

PSYC 308-001: T/Th 12:30 pm – 1:45 pm, SWNG 122

PSYC 308-002: T/Th 11:00 am – 12:15 pm, SWNG 122

Course website (UBC Canvas): <https://canvas.ubc.ca/courses/125941>  
(Only students officially registered in this course can access the course webpage on Canvas.)

## Land Acknowledgement:

UBC's Vancouver campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the x̱w̱məθḵw̱əy̱əm (Musqueam) people. The land occupied by our campus has historically been a place of learning for the Musqueam who, for millennia, have passed on their culture, history, and traditions from one generation to the next on this site. We are enormously lucky to have access to this beautiful land, and to be able to use it for our scholarly pursuits. Let us use it respectfully, and with gratitude.

## Teaching Team:

### Instructor: Dr. Mark Schaller (he / him)

Office: CIRS 4353 / Email: [schaller@psych.ubc.ca](mailto:schaller@psych.ubc.ca)

Office hours: Thursdays 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm in CIRS 4353, or by appointment

### TA (Section 001): Ian Hohm (he / him)

Office: Kenny 3605 / Email: [ihohm@psych.ubc.ca](mailto:ihohm@psych.ubc.ca)

Office hours: Mondays 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm in Kenny 3605, or by appointment

### TA (Section 002): Sophie Wagle (she / they)

Office: Kenny 4005 / Email: [to be announced soon]

Office hours: Fridays 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm in Kenny 4005, or by appointment

*Please respect "Guidelines for Using Email to Contact Instructors and TA's"  
(which you'll see below)*

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## Course Overview and Learning Objectives:

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. In order to understand human psychology within an evolutionary framework, it helps to adopt a “gene’s-eye view”—to think about human cognition and behavior from the perspective of a gene. This isn’t easy! (It sure doesn’t come naturally to most people.) Therefore, so one preliminary goal of this course is to encourage you do take that perspective, and to

help you do so. By taking that perspective, you will then be better able to make sense of (and think critically about) the many ways that evolutionary thinking can be productively applied within the psychological sciences. And that brings us to the bigger, broader goal of this course: It is designed to provide you with an overview of important topics of inquiry within evolutionary psychology, and a representative peek into important programs of research within evolutionary psychology. If the course is successfully (and if you successfully engage with the material presented within it), by the time the course is finished 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. The material presented in this course (e.g., readings, lectures, etc.) have been designed to help you accomplish these objectives, and the assessments of learning (e.g., exams) will be designed to assess your success in doing so.

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### **Course Format and Structure:**

This class is scheduled to meet twice a week, on Tuesday and Thursdays, and that's what we'll do. This is a big class, and I will use those class meetings to present course material in a lecture format, punctuated occasionally by opportunities for discussion of that that material. 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.

Since this is an in-person course (and *not* an online course), I'm expecting you to attend our class meetings in person, and it will almost certainly be to your educational benefit if you do. (Of course, if you are sick, it is best that you stay home and not infect others, no matter what you think you may be sick with.) What if you miss a class for some reason? I do *not* plan to record our in-person class meetings, but I *do* plan to make the PowerPoint files that I use for lectures available to you on Canvas. Those files probably won't be available until the class session itself, and they will typically be stripped-down versions from which I've removed things—e.g., photos—that are copywrited or otherwise problematic to put on Canvas. The essential content will be there, but some of the dazzle and/or context might be missing. Regardless, if you do miss a class session, it would be a good idea to reach out to one or more your classmates to get additional notes regarding what you missed.

In addition to material presented in lectures, a lot of course material will be presented in readings (and, occasionally, in other media such as YouTube videos). This material will be available to you on Canvas, and will organized in the form of "modules." Each module corresponds to one of our scheduled class meetings.

The material that appears in the readings (and, occasionally, other media) 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. You are responsible for learning all of it! If you want to do well in this class, be sure to keep up with the readings, and be sure to come to class.

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### **Brief Summary of What Will Happen When:**

Tuesday, Sept. 5: NO CLASS MEETING (Imagine UBC)  
Thursday, Sept. 7: Introduction to “Evolutionary Psychology”  
Tuesday, Sept. 12: Logical principles underlying evolutionary psychology  
Thursday, Sept. 14: The gene’s-eye view of life  
Tuesday, Sept. 19: Good genes  
Thursday, Sept. 21: Adapted cognition  
Tuesday, Sept. 26: The social context of adapted cognition  
Thursday, Sept. 28: Inclusive fitness and its implications  
Tuesday, Oct. 3: Review of what we’ve covered, and preview of where we’re going next  
Thursday, Oct. 5: MIDTERM EXAM 1  
Tuesday, Oct. 10: NO CLASS MEETING  
Thursday, Oct 12: NO CLASS MEETING (“Make-up Monday”)  
Tuesday, Oct. 17: Better safe than sorry (Error management)  
Thursday, Oct. 19: The behavioral immune system  
Tuesday, Oct. 24: Parental (and grandparental) investment  
Thursday, Oct. 26: Parental investment and sex differences in sexual behavior  
Tuesday, Oct. 31: Mate preferences  
Thursday, Nov. 2: Choosy women, show-off-y men  
Tuesday, Nov 7: Beyond sexual stereotypes (Female short-term mating)  
Thursday Nov. 9: MIDTERM EXAM 2  
Tuesday Nov. 14: NO CLASS MEETING (UBC Midterm Break)  
Thursday, Nov. 16 Kin-recognition  
Tuesday, Nov. 21: Parental care-giving  
Thursday, Nov. 23: Reciprocity and cooperation  
Tuesday, Nov. 28: Emotions and emotional expressions  
Thursday, Nov. 30: Intergroup conflict (ALSO: TERM PAPER DUE)  
Tuesday, Dec 5: Evolution and culture  
Thursday, Dec. 7: Perils & prospects of evolutionary psychology  
Date (and place) to be announced later: FINAL EXAM

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### **Required Reading Material:**

We will *not* be using any standard textbook for this course. Instead, the readings include chapters from a single classic popular-press book, and a large collection of scientific articles. These readings are available to you on Canvas.

The classic popular-press book is: *The Selfish Gene*, by Richard Dawkins. It was originally published in 1976, and several updated editions of the book have been

published since then. (Alas, the later editions preserve the casual use of sexist language from the original edition published in the 1970s.) I have made relevant chapters from the “30th Anniversary edition” available on the class website, in the form of pdf files. (You don’t need to buy a copy of the whole book; but if you do want to, it is readily buy-able from many bookstores, or order-able online, pretty cheaply. If you do buy it, it doesn’t matter which edition you buy; the chapters assigned in this course are essentially identical in all editions.)

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 these articles—in the form of pdf files—will be available to you on Canvas.

You’ll find the assigned readings for each class meeting in the “Modules” section of the Canvas course page. It will be to your educational benefit if you read those readings carefully and thoughtfully *before* class (and to re-visit those readings again afterwards).

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### **Assessments of Learning – Exams:**

There will be three exams. The first (Midterm Exam 1) will be on **Thursday, October 5**. The second (Midterm Exam 2) will be on **Thursday, November 9**. 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.

All exams will be in-person, in the classroom, and on paper. (The two Midterm Exams will be take place during our regularly-scheduled class time. in our regularly-scheduled classroom. The Final Exam will take place at a time and in a place to be determined later.)

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. (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, I will adhere to [UBC policies on “academic concession”](#) to determine the appropriate course

of action. Make sure you're familiar with these policies! (See also the syllabus section on "Academic Concession," below.)

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### **Assessments of Learning – Term Paper:**

There will be one Term Paper assignment (maximum length of 4 pages, double-spaced). This Term Paper is due on **Thursday, November 30**, and will count 10% toward your final course grade. You will be required to submit Term Papers on Turnitin.

This Term Paper assignment will provide an opportunity for you to demonstrate your learning of course material by applying that material in thoughtful and creative ways, to acquire additional knowledge about evolutionary psychological research (beyond that presented in course material), and to think critically about it all. In short, it's an opportunity for you to show off deep, thoughtful intellectual engagement with the topic matter of this course. Term Papers will be marked accordingly. (Term Papers will be marked on a 0 – 100 scale corresponding to the UBC grading scale, with the expectation that the distribution of marks will be consistent with the Department of Psychology's policy on overall grade distributions [see below].) Detailed instructions and guidelines—including a marking rubric—will be provided later in the term.

Important: For this Term Paper (unlike the exams) you have the option to either produce a Term paper all by yourself, or to collaborate with one or more other students in order to produce a co-authored paper. (For co-authored Term Papers, each author on that paper will receive the same mark.) There are lots of potential benefits—both intellectual and personal—that accrue from working collaboratively on a Term Paper. You aren't required to write a collaborative Term Paper, but we invite and encourage you to do so.

If you fail to submit your Term Paper by the deadline identified above, you will receive mark of "0" for this assignment. The only exception would be if an unanticipated event outside of your control—such as an acute health issue—prevents you from submitting the Term Paper by the deadline. If such a circumstance arises, I will adhere to [UBC policies on "academic concession"](#) to determine the appropriate course of action. (See also the syllabus section on "Academic Concession," below.)

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### **Scaling of Grades:**

In order to maintain equity across multiple sections of courses, and across the many different courses offered by the Psychology Department, psychology courses are required to comply with departmental policies regarding grade distributions. For 300-level courses, the relevant policy is this: The average final course grade is expected to be approximately 73. (There's a bit of wiggle-room in this policy, but not much: for a relatively weak class, the average grade is expected to be closer to 71; for an exceptionally strong class, the average grade might be allowed to be as high as 75). Realistically, in order to conform with Psychology Department policy, you can expect

that the final grades in this course (as in all 300-level courses) will be normally distributed around an average grade of approximately 73 (a low B). Students' final course grades may be scaled up or down, as necessary, in order to comply with this policy. The upshot is that approximately half the students in this class will receive final grades in the B range or above, and approximately half will receive final grades in the B- range or below. (Please remember that grades are not official until they appear on a student's academic record. Students receive both a percent and a letter grade for this course.)

Let me explain what this is all about. The primary function of course grades is *not* to tally, say, the percentage of items you got correct on a set of exams prepared by some idiosyncratic instructor, or anything like that. The primary function of course grades is to inform you (and other people) about your performance *relative* to other students taking the course. In order for grades to serve that 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's grading policy helps to ensure that final course grades provide this information (and does so in a way that is equitable for all students enrolled in all courses offered within the Psychology Department). So: If your performance is right in the middle of the overall grade distribution, then you'll get an average grade (a low B). If most students in class perform better than you, you'll get a lower-than-average grade (e.g., B-, C+, C, C-, D, 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+, A-, A, or A+)

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

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### **Extra Credit (Department of Psychology Research Participation System):**

You may earn up to 3 extra credit percentage points added to your final course grade by serving as a participant in one of the many different psychological studies that are being conducted by the department. To do so, you must use the Department of Psychology's Research Participation System: <https://ubc-psych.sona-systems.com/>. (As an alternative to serving as a research participant, you can also earn these extra credit points by completing a "library option, for which you must write summaries of peer-reviewed research articles, submitted on Turnitin.) Detailed instructions about how you can earn these extra credits (either by participating in in psychological studies or through the library option) can be found on the [Psychology Department's Human Subject Pool website](#).

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## **Guidelines for Using Email to Contact Instructors and TA's:**

You might have questions about course material (or about an exam or assignment) that you're unable to ask during a class session, or you might want to have some other outside-of-class conversation about an issue that is specific to you. If so, that's great; the members of the teaching team will be delighted to talk one-on-one with you. But *not* via email. It is entirely appropriate to use email to arrange a meeting if you're unable to attend regularly-scheduled office hours, but email is a terrible way to have a useful conversation about course material (or about exams or assignments or whatever). A good rule of thumb is this: If you have a question that will require more than a one-sentence response, don't use email to ask it. Instead: Please ask it in person, either during an appropriate moment during class, or during office hours.

(Also, if you do send an email inquiry, please maintain realistic expectations about response time. We all do our best to respond responsibly and speedily, but you are unlikely to receive an immediate response—especially if you send your email evenings or weekends.)

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## **Special Accommodations:**

Academic accommodations help students with a disability or ongoing medical condition overcome challenges that may affect their academic success. Students requiring academic accommodations must register with the [Centre for Accessibility](#). The Centre will determine that student's eligibility for accommodation. (Academic accommodations are not determined by instructors, and instructors should not ask you about the nature of your disability or ongoing medical condition, or request copies of your disability documentation. However, instructors may consult with the Centre for Accessibility should the accommodations affect the essential learning outcomes of a course.) If you have already arranged for accommodations through Centre for Accessibility, please let me know of these accommodations as soon as possible.

UBC also allows accommodations for all students' religious observances and for the cultural observances of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students. If this applies to you, please make sure you're familiar with the relevant UBC policies (which you can read about [here in the UBC Academic Calendar](#)), and let me know as soon as possible—and well in advance of any assignment or examination that poses a conflict for you—if you will require any accommodation on these grounds.

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## **Academic Concession:**

Under [UBC's academic concession policies](#), students who are unable to complete required coursework in a timely way *might* qualify for academic concession for any of three reasons: conflicting responsibilities; medical circumstances; and compassionate grounds. You should make sure that you are familiar with these policies prior to seeking

any form of academic concession. If you miss marked coursework (e.g., an exam or term paper deadline) and, after reviewing those policies carefully, you believe that you qualify for academic concession, here's what you should do: Contact the Instructor and your TA as soon as possible! You will be asked to complete an Academic Concession Self-Declaration form (which looks like [this](#)) and submit it to both your Instructor and TA. They will determine the appropriate course of action, strictly in accordance with UBC's academic concession policy. Please be aware that submission of an Academic Concession Self-Declaration form does *not* ensure the granting of the academic concession; it simply represents a request for academic concession. Requests will be granted only if the request is justified, according to [UBC's academic concession policies](#). Again, make sure you're familiar with the policies!

(If a student makes repeated requests for academic concession, the student will be referred to the Academic Advising office of their home faculty, who will be asked to consider the situation in greater detail in order to advise the teaching team on the most appropriate course of action.)

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### **Academic Integrity and Academic Misconduct (Cheating, etc.):**

All students are expected to know, understand, and follow UBC policies regarding academic integrity and student conduct (which you can read about in the [UBC Academic Calendar section on Student Conduct and Discipline](#), and can read more about on [UBC's explainer on academic misconduct](#). Harsh sanctions are imposed on students who violate these policies by engaging in cheating (e.g., receiving unauthorized assistance on an exam, or providing unauthorized assistance to another student), plagiarism (e.g., copying the work of others and pretending that it's work done by you), or other forms of academic misconduct. Incidences of cheating or plagiarism may result in a mark of zero, and more serious consequences may apply when the matter is referred to the Office of the Dean. Let me put it more plainly: Don't cheat and don't plagiarize. Not only because it violates UBC's policies on student conduct, but also because it's dishonest, unethical, and morally wrong. For your own sake—for the sake of your self-concept and happiness as a human being—don't do it.

A special note about generative artificial intelligence tools (e.g., ChatGPT): Use of AI tools (or any other kind of assistance) is *not* permitted during midterm exams and final exams in this course. (That would be cheating; see above.) Students will be permitted to use generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT) in a limited way—to gather relevant scholarly information, for example—when working on the Term Paper. However, students are ultimately accountable for the work they submit, and any content generated or supported by an AI tool must be carefully and transparently documented by students in an addendum to the Term Paper. (Additional guidance will be provided when students are presented with the Term Paper assignment.)

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## Course Discussion Board

The Canvas course page provides students the opportunity to engage in online discussions about course material. These discussions can be helpful to students—providing opportunities to obtain (from other students) clarifications and/or insights about course material, feedback on ideas, etc. The teaching team will occasionally plant seeds for such discussions by creating discussion topics (to be found on the “Discussions” tab of the Canvas course page) that all students are invited to engage in. Students’ contributions to these discussions won’t be marked, or even reviewed in any meaningful way, by the teaching team. It simply provides a Canvas-based means through which students can engage thoughtfully with course material and discuss it with each other—which can help students enjoy greater success in the course.

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### Class Conduct:

Comings and goings during class are disruptive, so please do your very best to show up on time and to stay for the entire class session. Also please make sure that cellphones and other distracting electronic stuff are silenced during class. And please don't chatter when someone else is saying something that is intended for the whole class to hear. I do want you to actively participate in the class—to ask questions and to offer thoughtful comments and things like that—but please do so in respectful way.

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### Equity and Inclusion and Diversity and Respect:

University courses should be conducive to learning and rigorous intellectual inquiry within a context in which everyone feels 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 express themselves thoughtfully when discussing course material; and, when you do express yourself, it's important that you do so in a manner that shows respect for every other member of this class. Therefore, please make sure that you're familiar with UBC's [Student Code of Conduct](#) and with [UBC's policies on building an environment of respect, diversity, opportunity and inclusion](#). (You can find additional information and resources pertaining to equity, diversity, and inclusion in the [“Equity, Diversity and Inclusion” section of Psychology Department's website](#).)

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 to the diversity and inclusion goals identified above); 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.)

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### **Copyright and Intellectual Property:**

Readings for this course are copyrighted, and cannot be redistributed without permission of the copyright owner. Other course materials (e.g., lecture PowerPoint files) are the intellectual property of the instructor and cannot be redistributed (e.g., posted on any other website, or shared in any other way) without instructor permission. Violation of these policies may lead to academic discipline.

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### **Unanticipated Events that Might Disrupt the Delivery of this Course:**

Just as students sometimes experience a health crisis or disruptive personal event, it is possible that the instructor or a TA might also experience such a thing—which could potentially affect plans for the course (e.g., delivery of course material, timeliness of feedback, etc.). If so, we will let you know about it as soon as possible using the announcements and/or email features in Canvas, along with any modifications to course planning. We sure hope this doesn't happen! But if it does, we will ask for your patience, flexibility, and compassion, as well as continued dedication to your own and classmates' learning during that time.

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### **Additional Useful Resources for Students:**

Additional resources may also be helpful as you contend with the challenges of taking university courses, and just dealing with life's challenges more broadly. Here are some helpful resources offered by UBC:

- Guidance on useful skills for students: <https://learningcommons.ubc.ca/student-toolkits/>
  - Student's guide to Canvas: <https://students.canvas.ubc.ca/>
  - Support for dealing with stress: <https://students.ubc.ca/health/health-topics/understanding-stress>
  - Counselling Services: <https://students.ubc.ca/health/counselling-services>
  - Wellness Centre: <https://students.ubc.ca/health/wellness-centre>
  - Student Health Services: <http://students.ubc.ca/health/student-health-service>
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### **Potential for Changes to This Syllabus:**

This syllabus provides a roadmap for how this course will proceed. It's possible that some aspects of this roadmap will be revealed to be less-than-optimal. Consequently, it's possible that some revisions (in course materials, in scheduling, in policy, etc.) may have to be made as we proceed through the course, in order to achieve the learning objectives. Any such revisions—which will be announced and posted on the class website on Canvas—will “count” just as much as policies outlined in this syllabus.

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