

PSY 504-Evolutionary Psychology Spring 2010

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Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:00 to 11:00 or by appointment

Class time and location: 3:00-4:15 Tue & Thurs, Poe 736

Text: *Evolutionary Psychology: The New Science of the Mind, 3rd edition* by David M. Buss

Prerequisites: While there are no specific prerequisites other than an introductory psychology course, it is expected that students will have graduate or upper-class undergraduate standing and a strong interest in the topic. While most students will likely be psychology majors, students from other disciplines with appropriate backgrounds and interests may be eligible.

Purpose: This class is meant to be a graduate-level course both for graduate students seeking academic breadth and for senior psychology majors wishing to have a capstone course. A capstone course should be a course that brings together much of what you have been learning during your academic career. First you probably took an introductory survey course during which you learned the breadth of psychology, but at a relatively superficial level. Since then you have taken many courses from various areas of psychology during which you investigated these areas in more depth and learned the research methods that allow you to explore theoretical issues within these areas. This capstone course should once again explore the breadth of psychology, but using some of the depth of thinking that you have now developed. A good way to do this is to use an overarching theoretical approach such as that provided by evolutionary theory. This theoretical framework seems ideal for exploring many diverse areas of psychology.

Another interesting feature of the evolutionary approach is that it provides the structure for answering ultimate questions about human behavior: *why* questions rather than *how* or *what* questions. For most of us these are the questions that originally attracted us to psychology. These are also the questions that naturally lead us across disciplinary borders into other sciences, humanities, and arts, such as anthropology, biology, philosophy, history, economics, and even music and visual arts. I believe evolutionary thinking offers the possibility of integrating psychology with other fields and producing intellectual generalists.

Student Outcomes: In keeping with the stated purposes of the course the following student outcomes are expected:

By the end of the course, the students will be able to:

1. Explain evolutionary theory as proposed by Darwin and Wallace as well as by theorists of the modern synthesis (Fisher, Trivers, Hamilton, Dawkins, Sober, etc.)
2. Distinguish between theoretical positions of evolutionary psychology and the standard social science model.
3. Understand the various environments of evolutionary adaptedness from those of non-human primates through modern humanoids.
4. Enumerate and explain the various methodologies used to support or refute evolutionary theories.
5. Understand the difference between proximate and ultimate questions.
6. Distinguish between evolutionary adaptations and other behaviors that are evolutionary by-products or due to evolutionary drift, founder effects, etc.
7. Beginning with common human behaviors, propose testable evolutionary hypotheses that explain why these behaviors may occur in the following domains: food acquisition, preference for environments, attraction and mating, parenting, kinship, cooperation, aggression, dominance, cognition, mental illness, culture, arts, morality, and religion.

Structure and Grading: A graduate-level seminar course should require students to take a major role in their own learning. For that reason, it will be expected that all students will attend, will have read the required material, and will participate actively in discussions. After the first few classes, that will be tutorial lectures, there will be a student discussion leader for each topic who will facilitate the discussion (not lecture to the class). The leader will certainly have read the basic material, but should have also found additional materials to enhance the discussions.

There will be three short-essay question tests. I will provide the class with 10 to 15 potential test questions prior to the tests. Students should then think about these potential questions and work on formulating concise answers. During the actual test time several questions (approximately 4) from the list will be asked with only a half page allowed for writing each answer. Students will be permitted to discuss the potential questions among themselves prior to the tests. However, the answers given at test time are expected to be each student's own work. I will expect no duplicate wording of answers.

Half of your grade will be determined by your performance on the tests as described above. Twenty percent of the grade will be determined by your effectiveness as a discussion leader as judged by the instructor on the basis of:

- Asking interesting and insightful questions that prompt much class discussion.
- Citing sources beyond the basic assigned readings.
- Keeping the discussion on track for the assigned topic.

Thirty percent by your grade will be based on your contribution as a discussion participant. Participation will be determined by the following criteria:

- Unexcused absences will negatively affect participation evaluation.
- A+ performance: Student has read assigned material and, in addition, often cites unassigned sources. Is attentive and often volunteers relevant creative comments.
- A performance: Student has read assigned material and occasionally cites unassigned sources. Is attentive and often volunteers relevant creative comments.

- B performance: Student has read material. Is attentive and occasionally volunteers relevant comments.
- C performance: Student has on occasion not read assigned material and does not often volunteer relevant comments.
- D performance: Student has usually not read the assigned material, is inattentive, and very seldom volunteers relevant comments.
- F performance: Student has not read the assigned material, is inattentive, and fails to volunteer relevant comments.

I hope and expect that this class will be a lot of fun. I personally find the topics intriguing and provocative. Exactly how much fun this class will be is up to you. Your willingness to contribute and the quality of the discussions will largely determine the success of the class.

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory; it is necessary for you to participate in class discussions which are a major part of this course. Make sure you read the university attendance policy online:

http://www.ncsu.edu/policies/academic_affairs/pols_regs/REG205.00.4.php.

Students with Disabilities: This class conforms to the university policy on working with students with disabilities. This policy can be found at http://www.ncsu.edu/provost/hat/current/appendix/appen_k.html, and states in part: " Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with verifiable disabilities. In order to take advantage of available accommodations, students must register with Disability Services for Students at 1900 Student Health Center, Campus Box 7509, 515-7653." For more information on NC State's policy on working with students with disabilities, please see the [Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Regulation \(REG02.20.1\)](#)

Academic Integrity: If a student fails to follow the rules of academic integrity, the *NCSU Code of Student Conduct* will apply. This can be found in the *Student Handbook* and at <http://www.fis.ncsu.edu/ncsulegal/41.03-codeof.htm>. Depending upon the degree of severity of the incident, penalties could range from giving no credit for the work to expulsion from the University. Students are expected to adhere to the Honor Pledge: "I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this test or assignment." It is the understanding and expectation that your signature on any test or assignment means that you neither gave nor received unauthorized aid.

Class Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reading Assignment</u>	<u>Facilitator</u>
Jan12	Class Plans	--	
Jan14	Evolutionary History	Chpt 1, 1-20	
Jan19	EP & SSSM	Chpt 1, 24-35	
Jan21	What were EEAs like?	Chpt 1, 20-24 <i>Before the Dawn</i>	
Jan26	EP as empirical science	Chpt 2	
Jan28	Food acquisition & selection	Chpt 3, 71-89	
Feb2	Shelter, fear, & dying	Chpt 3, 89-104	
Feb4	Women's Mating I	Chpt 4, <i>The Evolution of Desire</i>	
Feb9	Women's Mating II	Chpt 6, 183-196, <i>The Red Queen</i> , Chpt 7	
Feb11	TEST 1		
Feb16	Men's Mating I	Chpt 5, <i>The Evolution of Desire</i>	
Feb18	Men's Mating II	Chpt 6, 171-183, <i>The Red Queen</i> , Chpt 6	
Feb23	Parenting	Chpt 7, <i>The Nurture Assumption</i> , Chpt 6	
Feb25	Kinship	Chpt 8	
Mar2	Cooperation	Chpt 9, <i>Unto Others</i>	
Mar4	Aggression	Chpt 10, 291-299, <i>Yanomamo, Murderer Next Door</i>	
Mar9	Sex Diff. In Aggression	Chpt 10, 299-321, <i>Homicide</i>	
Mar11	Sexual Conflict	Chpt 11, <i>Natural History of Rape</i>	
Mar23	TEST 2		
Mar25	Dominance	Chpt 12	
Mar30	Cognitive Psy. I	Chpt 13, 384-398, <i>How the Mind Works</i>	
Apr6	Cog. Psy. & Sexual Selection	<i>The Mating Mind</i>	
Apr8	Mental Illness	Chpt 13, 412-416, <i>Evolution & Human Beh. Part VI</i>	
Apr13	Culture	Chpt 13, 416-420, <i>Darwin's Cathedral</i> Chpt 1	
Apr15	Arts.	Chpt 13, 420-422, <i>Singing Neanderthals</i>	
Apr20	Morality	<i>The Moral Animal</i>	
Apr22	TEST 3		
Apr27	Religion	<i>Darwin's Cathedral</i>	
Apr29	Flex		

Note: The chapter and page assignments are for Buss' text and constitute required reading. The titles in italics are for books that contain additional readings. This material is required reading for discussion leaders and may be read by other students who wish to enhance their class participation. These books are available on loan from the instructor. The final flex session will be used for discussing issues not previously discussed.