

HUMAN BEHAVIOURAL ECOLOGY

Spring 2014

Our objective in this course is to consider the implications of evolution and natural selection for the study of human behaviour and cognition. If human action was easy to understand, there would be no need for the discipline of psychology. Given that our reasons for doing the things that we do are often opaque, we need to find ways of looking at ourselves from a number of overlapping vantage points, while never forgetting that a proper understanding requires an integration of these various perspectives. Perhaps the primary difficulty is caused by the fact that we are both biological creatures and cultural creations at one and the same time. The entanglements of our biology and cultures are so deep and fundamental that it is difficult to know how to begin to tease apart their influences, or even whether it is even sensible to do so. Regardless of whether it is or not, we have to start somewhere and so we are going to address *this* question as a way of doing so:



*What do we gain in understanding by considering ourselves
as animals with a particular evolutionary history?*

Instructor:

Peter Henzi; Room C878 (Phone: 403-317-2839); peter.henzi@uleth.ca. Consultations either after class or by appointment.

Teaching Assistant:

Deanna Forrester (deanna.forrester@uleth.ca)

Lectures:

Thursday: 1800-2050 in room C640

Textbook:

There is NO textbook for this course. I will provide readings for each topic as well as PDFs of the lectures themselves.

****Please note that ALL materials and examination results will be posted on Moodle.**

Assessment:

Two midterm tests (30% each) and one final exam (40%) - all multiple choice questions - based on material from both lectures and readings.

Grading:

Final letter grades for the course will be determined using the following scheme:

A+	90-100	C+	68-69
A	83-89	C	63-67
A-	80-82	C-	60-62
B+	78-79	D+	57-59
B	73-77	D	50-56
B-	70-72	F	< 50

Required disciplinary note

All students in the course are subject to the student discipline policy for academic and non-academic offenses in accordance with the University Calendar.

Course Topic Areas

1. An evolutionary approach to human behaviour
2. Human origins, modes of subsistence and biogeography
3. Human life histories
4. Parental investment
5. Sexual selection, conflict and mate choice
6. Kin selection, altruism and cooperation
7. The evolution of complex societies

Midterm 1 (30%) TBA

Midterm 2 (30%) TBA

Final Exam – registrar scheduled (40%) and CUMULATIVE

Supplementary Practical Exercise

Our understanding and appreciation of the material with which we are confronted is significantly enhanced once we move from being passive recipients to become active participants in the process of knowledge creation. As there are generally too few opportunities for this at the university, I am offering you an opportunity to collect and analyse relevant data and to write it up as a scientific report. My hope is that your sense of how science is done will be enhanced by this. To encourage you to do so, you will be given a bonus mark of 5% of the course total, PROVIDED THAT YOU OBTAIN A PASSING GRADE for the assignment. Note that (1), this is NOT a required component of the course (i.e. you do **not** have to do it) and (2), the data with which you work will not be used for any other purpose.