Instructor: Joseph Manson  
Office: 387 Haines Hall  
Office Hours: Tu 11-11:50, Th 2-2:50 or by appointment  
Phone: 267-4337  
Email: jmanson@anthro.ucla.edu

Overview

This course is a general introduction to biological anthropology, intended for incoming graduate students who have yet to explore this subfield. The course consists of two parts: Anthro 7 and a seminar. Anthro 7 is an undergraduate course. Students in 120G are expected to attend the Anthro 7 lectures (Tues-Thurs 12:30-1:45 in Haines 39) and do the assigned readings for Anthro 7. Participation in Anthro 7 discussion sections is not required. You will also take in-class midterm and final exams concurrently with the Anthro 7 students, though these exams will be somewhat more challenging than the Anthro 7 exams.

In addition, we will meet each Friday from 10:00-1:50 for a seminar. In preparation for each week’s meeting, in addition to the Anthro 7 readings, we will read several papers or book chapters. Some of these are compiled in a reader which is available from Course Reader Material, 1137 Westwood Blvd. (Tel: 310-443-3300). The others are available as PDF files on the course website.

I will begin each meeting with an introductory presentation. Then we’ll have a round table discussion.

Half of your grade will be based on your score on the the two in-class exams. The other half will be based on two take-home essay exams. Questions will be drawn from the entire range of issues covered in the course.

Schedule of Topics and Readings

Week 1: Jan. 12.
Natural selection. How natural selection modifies organisms so that they are adapted to their environments.


1. This is a change from previous years’ Anthro 120G courses, mandated by the Faculty Executive Committee of the College of L&S.
Week 2: Jan. 19.
Adaptation. Why adaptations require a special kind of explanation. How natural selection explains the existence of adaptations. The importance of cumulative, gradual change in the explanation of adaptations.


Speciation & Evo Devo. How new species form, and how evolution is related to individual development.


Week 4: Feb. 2.
Can behavior evolve? In mammals, much behavior is learned. Natural selection works because the differences between individuals are genetic differences. Many people believe that learned behavior cannot evolve because differences among individuals are due to differences in the environment. To see why this is wrong, read:

(review) Boyd & Silk Chapter 3, pp. 66-69.

Take-home midterm exam will be distributed. Due: Tuesday Feb. 6, 5:00 pm.

Week 5: Feb. 9.
Infanticide among primates. In the early 1970s Sarah Hrdy observed that male langurs sometimes kill infants, and proposed that this was an evolved reproductive strategy. This idea was widely criticized because many believed that selection could never favor the killing of infant by members of the same species. The controversy is still going on. We consider the arguments and the data.

Week 6: Feb. 16.
Theory of mind. A central element in human social life is that people are good at figuring out what other people are thinking, and using these inferences to predict others’ behavior. Can any nonhuman animal do this?


Week 7: Feb. 23.
Why humans have big brains and live long lives. Among the distinctive features of Homo sapiens are enormous brains (~6 times what would be expected for a mammal of our size) and long juvenile periods and long lifespans (again, adjusted for body size). Are these features linked in an adaptive complex? Why and when did they evolve?


Week 8: Mar 2.
The origin of anatomically and behaviorally modern humans. Modern human morphology first appeared in Africa 150,000-200,000 years ago. More archaic-looking contemporaries of Homo sapiens persisted in much of the Old World until about 30,000 years ago. The archaeological signature of modern human behavior first appeared somewhat later than modern human morphology. This signature includes more elaborate tools, more complex settlement patterns, and the first evidence of symbolic expression. Here we consider the origins and spread of anatomically modern humans and the so-called “human revolution” of the Upper Paleolithic.

**Week 9: Mar. 9.**

“Race.”

As folk categories, racial classifications exert a powerful grip on most people’s imaginations. Here we examine why human genetic variation is too complex to be adequately described by racial categorization. We also, more speculatively, explore why people find it easy and appealing to create racial classifications, despite their lack of empirical foundations. As preparation for the latter topic, you will be introduced to the basic ideas of evolutionary psychology.


**Week 10: Mar. 16.**

Evolutionary psychology of sex differences.

Unlike “racial” differences, sex difference in human behavior are expected based on firmly established theoretical principles. Here we consider the adaptive significance of men’s proprietary attitudes toward female sexuality, and women’s counter-adaptations.


**Take-home final exam will be distributed.** Due: Fri. Mar. 23, 11:00 AM.