

# Psychological Anthropology

## Anthropology 260

### Fall 2003

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**Meeting Time:** T-TH 1-2:15pm

**Office Hours:** T-TH 2:25-3:25pm or by appointment (email me to set it up)

#### Course Description

Psychological anthropology is a rapidly expanding subfield of anthropology that seeks to simultaneously understand how reliably developing (pan human) aspects of human minds influence the transmission and dynamics of culture, thought and behavior, and how, in turn, cultural patterns and environment shape minds, emotions and cognitive processes. This course will emphasize recent theoretical approaches that allow us to transcend debates such as “nature vs. nurture” and “human universals” to examine human minds as joint products of three interactive processes: genetic evolution, cultural evolution (history) and ontogeny (development and learning).

#### Organizing Questions in this Course?

- 1) What are the evolutionary foundations of human psychology and culture? How and why are humans so different from non-human animals?
- 2) Can human psychology be understood apart from culture? And, can culture be understood without reference to human biology and evolution?
- 3) How do individuals learn culture? What is learned, how is it learned, and from whom?
- 4) What are the implications—for understanding such things as child rearing, violence, ethnicity, religion, social change and economic development—of a cultural-psychological approach to human behavior?

#### Course Materials and Resources:

Blackboard (<http://classes.emory.edu>) contains all of the non-book readings for the course. These readings will be under either “Course Documents” or “External Links” (the green buttons). I will also post messages, updates and the quizzes (described below) as the course goes along. We will also put up discussion boards on various topics as needed. You should try to check our class blackboard site at least twice a week.

#### Books to buy, or otherwise obtain

- *The Origins of Human Nature* by David Bjorklund and Anthony D. Pellegrini
- *Culture in Mind* by Bradd Shore
- *Culture of Honor* by Richard Nisbett & Dov Cohen
- *Families of the Forest* by Allen Johnson

#### Posted Readings (on the Course Website, includes optional readings)

- 1) Cosmides & Tooby (1998) *Evolutionary Psychology: A Primer* (see link from Blackboard)

- 2) Richerson, Peter and Robert Boyd (forthcoming) *The Origin of Cultures*.
- 3) Boesch, Christophe and Michael Tomasello (1998) Chimpanzee and Human Cultures. *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 39(5): 591-614.
- 4) Gil-White, Francisco (2001) Are ethnic groups biological species to the human brain? *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 42(4): 515-554
- 5) Boyer, Pascal (1994) Cognitive constraints on cultural representations: Natural ontologies and religious ideas. In *Mapping the Mind*, edited by L. Hirschfeld and S. Gelman. Cambridge University Press.
- 6) Harris, Judith Rich (1995) Where is the Child's Environment? A Group Socialization Theory of Development. *Psychological Review*, Vol. 102(3):458-489.
- 7) Henrich, Joseph & Gil-White, Francisco (2001) The Evolution of Prestige: freely conferred deference as a mechanism for enhancing the benefits of cultural transmission. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 22 (3): 165-196.
- 8) Ekman, Paul (1999) Basic Emotions. In *Handbook of Cognition and Emotion*. T. Dalgleish and M. Power (eds.). John Wiley & Sons Ltd., Sussex, U.K.
- 9) Levy, Robert (1973) *Tahitians: Mind and Experience in the Society Islands*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago. Chapter 1, 8 and 9 are posted.

**Course Requirements and weightings for final grade:**

This course has two mid-course examinations, one final exam, six open book 'reading quizzes' and an optional extra credit research paper. The relative weight in grading breaks down as follows:

Grading Instrument	Percentage contribution
Attendance, participation	5%
Reading Quizzes	18%
Mid-course Exam 1	22%
Mid-course Exam 2	25%
Final Exam	30%

**Attendance Policy:** I won't take attendance regularly, except in the beginning of the semester. Instead, I'll "spot-check" by taking attendance whenever I feel like it. This will most likely occur if the class looks underpopulated.

**Reading Quizzes:** These 6 quizzes will be done at home on Blackboard. These are scattered throughout the semester and are meant to supply an incentive for you to keep up with the reading. They are open book, and are meant to be easy (if you did the reading). While these quizzes are open book, they are not "open friend" (which means you are bound by the honor code to not take your answers from anywhere except your book, or your brain). Last year two students received 'administrative F's' from the honor council in this class because they decided to test my ability to detect cheaters. Blackboard supplies analytical tools that make it fairly easy to catch cheaters. These must be completed 30 minutes before the

class in which they are “due”.

*Mid-course Exams:* These two 70 minute in-class examinations are meant to test your general mastery of the course material, as well as your ability to integrate and apply it. There will be some multiple-choice questions and true/false, but much of the test will be short answer style. These exams will be non-cumulative, and will cover only material since the beginning of the course, or the previous exam.

*Final Exam:* The structure of the final and the kinds of questions will mirror the other two exams. However, the final is cumulative over the entire semester.

*Optional Extra Credit Research Paper:* Students may write a research paper on any approved topic after consultation with the instructor. Interested students must discuss this option with the instructor before proceeding. All topics must be approved before class #24, and paper must be turned in by 5pm on **the day before** the Final Exam. Depending on quality and effort, students may receive between 0 and 10% added to their final grade. In the past, some students have turned in research papers of extremely low quality (last minute, poorly written, research from web, etc.). Such papers annoy me and receive zeroes.

NOTE: In late November you have two books due, *Culture of Honor* and *Families of the Forest*. You should start reading these well ahead of when they are due (maybe start today?). There are Reading Quizzes due for both, so you won't be able to fake it.

## **SCHEDULE**

Aug 28, Class 1: Introduction to course, discussion of the syllabus and questionnaire, etc. First lecture on culture and psychology: Puzzles and evidence on how culture affects perceptive and cognitive abilities.

### **I. The Evolutionary Foundations of Cultural Capacities and Human Psychology: Three Approaches**

Sept 2, Class 2: Evolutionary Psychology: Innateness Approaches

*Readings:* Cosmides & Tooby (Evolutionary Psychology: A Primer)

<http://www.psych.ucsb.edu/research/cep/primer.html>

*Questions:* What is the problem with distinguishing “instinct” from “reason”? What is the problem with distinguishing “emotion” or “feeling” from “reason”? What is the standard social science model? What is a module? Why isn't “generalized learning” a sensible approach to human cognition and behavior?

Sept 4, Class 3: Development Evolutionary Psychology

*Readings:* B&P Chapter 1, 2 & 3

Due: Reading Quiz #1 (must be completed on BB 30 minutes before class)

Sept 9, Class 4: Culture-Gene Evolutionary Foundations of Psychology

*Optional Readings:* Richerson and Boyd (Chapters 1, 2 and 3 on Class Website)

Sept 11, Class 5: Culture is real and important, continued

Optional Readings: Richerson and Boyd (Chapter 3 on Class Website)

Sept 16, Class 6: Culture is both adaptive and maladaptive, and General Discussion and Review

Optional Readings: Richerson and Boyd, Chapter 4 and 5.

Sept 18, Class 8 How to build a cultural species?

*Readings:* B&P Chapter 4 and 5

Sept 23, Class 9: Prepared to Learn

*Readings:* B&P Chapter 6 and Chapter 10

Sept 25, Class 10: Cognition and Culture in Non-Human Primates: Do non-humans have culture?

*Readings:* B&P Chapter 7; Boesch & Tomasello (Class Website)

Sept 30, Class 11: History, Controversy, Comparison, Review and Discussion

Questions: What are the similarities and differences between the approaches of B&P, B&R and T&C? What do you think might be the strengths and weakness of each approach? Can they be reconciled? Are they mutually exclusive?

Due: Reading Quiz #2

Oct 2, Class 12: Review, Discussion and Film (TBA)

Oct 7, Class 13: Exam I

## **II. Applications of Evolutionary Theory to Understanding Cognition**

Oct 9, Class 14: Evolutionary theory meets Cognitive Anthropology: Folkbiology and Colors

Oct 16, Class 15: Do people use folkbiology to approach human ethnic differences: The new concept of "folkethnicity". Are ethnic groups "species" to the human brain?

*Readings:* Gil-White (Class Website)—you don't have to read the commentaries.

Oct 21, Class 16: Ghosts, gods, superheroes, aliens and other mythic creatures: The evolved universal structure of religious thought.

## **III. Cultural Acquisition: What's Acquired? How? From Whom? And, When?**

Oct 23, Class 17: Mental Representations, Mental Models and Culture

*Readings:* Shore (p.42-71)

Oct 28, Class 18: Cultural learning, but from whom?

## Psychological Anthropology 260

*Reading:* Harris, Judith Rich (<http://www.apa.org/journals/rev/rev1023458.html>), but also look at <http://home.att.net/~xchar/tna/>)

Due: Reading Quiz #3

Oct 30, Class 19: Evolved Mechanisms for Cultural Learning: Prestige and Conformity

**Readings: Henrich & Gil-White (Class Website)**

Nov 4, Class 20: The classic dilemma of Psychological Anthropology solved: Psychic Unity Muddle, cultural learning, mental models, modes of transmission and consensus.

*Reading:* Shore (p. 3-41, 207-261)

Nov 6, Class 21: Cultural Models, Cognitive Conflict and the Origin of “meaning”? How do experiences come to “mean” something?

*Readings:* Shore (p. 265-306 and 311-340)

Nov 11, Class 22: Emotions, Feelings, Culture and Evolution: What’s universal and what varies across cultures and individuals? Do people in different societies “feel” differently? Do all societies have the emotion we call “guilt”?

*Readings:* Ekman (on Blackboard)

Optional (read a classic ethnography of Tahitian life): Levy Chapters (Class Website: RR)

Nov 13, Class 23: Film, Discussion and Review Film:

Film: E.E. Evan Pritchard and Azande Magic

Nov 18: **Exam II**

## V. Integrations and applications of a culture-psychology approach

Nov 20, Class 26: Culture of Honor

*Reading:* Nisbett & Cohen (whole book)

*Due:* Reading Quiz #5

*Last Chance to discuss Optional Research Paper*

Nov 25, Class 27: Lecture, Discussion and Review of Nisbett & Cohen’s *Culture of Honor*

Dec 2, Class 28: What is the nature of human sociality? What is the span or range of human societies? Do people have mental models of social relationships? Where do they come from?

*Readings:* Johnson (entire book)

*Due:* Reading Quiz #6

## Psychological Anthropology 260

Dec 4, Class 28: Cross-cultural Research on Economic Behavior: Economic decisions are often thought of as a behavioral domain that is not heavily influenced by “culture”—unlike domains such as religion or music. Is this true? Does it make sense to have “Economics”, “Psychology”, and “Anthropology”, and “Sociology”?

Dec 9, Class 29: Lecture: From evolution and psychology to sociology and history: How do micro-level analyses of cultural learning help to explain macro-level patterns such as large-scale cooperation, economic specialization, ethnicity and “cultures”. Also, Review and Discussion for the final exam. The Question of Human Universals. What do we mean by human universals (what have others meant by this term)? Are there any?

Final Exam: Dec 11 (Thurs) 4:30-7pm