

## Evolutionary Psychology

<http://content.csbs.utah.edu/~cashdan/evpsych>

### Course Description

Evolutionary Psychology is an interdisciplinary field that studies how our preferences, emotions, and ways of thinking and behaving have been shaped by natural selection. This course discusses how our minds and behavior have evolved to cope with problems of survival, mating and parenting, cooperation, conflict, and status competition.

### Readings

- Buss, *Evolutionary Psychology: The New Science of the Mind, 6th edition*; required (used copies available)
- E-reserve readings (see course outline)

### Class website (revised guidelines)

Submit assignments to Canvas.

Use the course website <http://content.csbs.utah.edu/~cashdan/evpsych> for everything else. The website includes copies of the syllabus, studyguides, and other guidelines. Announcements are posted on the website.

### Contact Information

My office is 4431 in Gardner Commons, and my office phone is 801-581-4672. I am always available after class; if you want to set up an appointment, the best way to contact me is via email ([ecashdan@gmail.com](mailto:ecashdan@gmail.com)).

### Course Requirements

Grades will be based on:

- 6 quizzes. There will be no make-ups for missed quizzes, but I will drop your lowest score (9% each=45%). In the very unlikely event that you are unavoidably absent for two quizzes and notify me ahead of time, I will ensure that you are not penalized for missing the second. If you know what is in the studyguides, you will do fine on the quizzes.
- 6 short essays (5% each=30%). See the course homepage for links and guidance.
- Final exam or term paper (25%). Final will be like the quizzes, but cumulative. A term paper is an alternative to the final exam, and is optional. If you choose to write one, you must follow intermediate deadlines, both for getting my approval of the topic, and for submitting an annotated bibliography. See detailed instructions on the webpage. You may also do both, if you wish, in which case I will use the highest grade.

### How to submit written work

Submit essays and term papers (if you decide to write one) to Canvas; no hardcopy is needed. If you want comments, write “comments please” at the top.

## Course Outline

### Jan 7: Introduction to course

### Jan 9: Adaptation and maladaptation

- Buss, ch. 1

### Jan 14: Inclusive fitness, sexual selection

- Buss, ch. 1

### Jan 16: Plasticity and learning (from genes to behavior)

- reserve: Ridley, “Genes are so liberating”
- Buss on evoked culture (pp. 392–393)
- reserve: Cashdan, “What is a human universal?”

### Jan 21: The science of evolutionary psychology; Quiz #1

- Buss ch. 2
- Read “Science isn’t broken,” do the exercise (“hack your way to scientific glory...”). Your first essay assignment (due Jan 28) is to write a brief (approximately 200-300 word) review of your analyses and what you learned from it, and submit to Canvas.  
<https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/science-isnt-broken/>

### Jan. 23: Survival 1, Food preferences

- Buss ch. 3 (67-76)
- read Sherman & Billig, “Darwinian gastronomy: Why we use spices” open access at:  
<https://academic.oup.com/bioscience/article/49/6/453/229475>

### Jan 28: Survival 2, Evolutionary medicine 1

- essay #1 due today
- reserve: Schaller & Park, “The behavioral immune system (and why it matters)”
- reserve: Nesse and Williams, “Evolution and the origins of disease”
- watch “The strange politics of disgust” video (for essay #2)

### Jan 30: Survival 3, Evolutionary medicine 2

- Buss 90-95 (evolutionary medicine), 388–391 (clinical psychology)
- reserve: Dutton, “The wisdom of psychopaths”
- read “How your cat is making you crazy” open access at <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/03/how-your-cat-is-making-you-crazy/308873/>

### Feb 4: Survival 4, Fear and adaptive biases; Quiz #2

- essay #2 due today
- Buss ch. 3 (84-90)
- reserve: Stefanucci, “Follow your heart: Emotion adaptively influences perception”
- reserve: Ohman, “The malicious serpent: Snakes as a prototypical stimulus...”

**Feb 6: Survival 5, Cognition**

- Buss 363–375 (cognitive psychology)
- reserve: “How weird are you? Oddball minds of the Western world”
- watch “Simple heuristics that make us smart” video (for essay # 3)

**Feb 11: Survival 6, Navigation**

- Buss chapter 3 (concludes with this lecture)
- reserve: Cashdan & Gaulin “Why go there: Evolution of mobility and spatial cognition in women and men”

**Feb 13: Mating 1: Sexual selection**

- essay #3 due today
- reserve: Puts, “Human sexual selection”
- watch: Why Sex (streaming information forthcoming)

**Feb 18: Mating 2: Women’s long-term mating strategies**

- Buss ch. 4

**Feb 20 Mating 3: Men’s long-term mating strategies; Quiz #3**

- Buss ch. 5
- Maner and Ackerman, “Ecological Sex Ratios and Human Mating”

**Feb 25: Mating 4: Short-term sexual strategies**

- Buss ch. 6
- reserve: Scelza, “Choosy but not chaste”
- watch “Asante Market Women” video (for essay #4); see link on homepage

**Feb 27: Life history theory 1: Guest lecture, Bruce Ellis**

- Buss pp. 381–383 (life history theory)
- recommended video, Brain energetics and the evolution of human childhood

**Mar 3: Life history theory 2**

- essay #4 due today
- reserve: Mittal, “Cognitive adaptations to stressful environments”

**Mar 5: Parenting 1: Parental investment**

- Buss ch. 7
- reserve: Hrdy, “natural born mothers”

**Mar 10-12: Spring break**

**Mar 17: Parenting 2: Alloparents; Quiz #4**

- Buss ch. 7–8
- reserve: Sear “Beyond the nuclear family: An evolutionary perspective on parenting”

**Mar 19: Kinship: Kin selection and kin conflict**

- Buss ch. 8

**Mar 24: Group living 1: Evolution & ontogeny of human prosociality**

- reserve: Warneken & Tomasello, “Varieties of altruism in children and chimpanzees”
- watch Tomasello “Becoming Human: A theory of ontogeny” video (for essay #5)

**Mar 26: Group living 2: Reciprocity, coalitions, and collective action**

- Buss ch. 9 (2 lectures)
- reserve: Sigmund, Fehr and Nowak, “Economics of fair play”
- reserve: Ridley and Low, “Can selfishness save the environment?”
- watch for next time: The Social Brain; stream from Marriott at [https://digital-films-com.ezproxy.lib.utah.edu/p\\_ViewVideo.aspx?xtid=5686](https://digital-films-com.ezproxy.lib.utah.edu/p_ViewVideo.aspx?xtid=5686)

**Mar 31: Group living 3: The social brain**

- essay #5 due today
- Buss ch. 9 and p. 380 (“theory of mind”)
- reserve: Neuberg & Schaller, “An evolutionary threat-management approach to prejudices”

**Apr 2: Group living 4: Morality and religion; Quiz #5**

- paper topics due, if you are writing a paper (send via email, expect guidance before approval)
- Buss pp. 376–378
- reserve: Haidt, “The new synthesis in moral psychology”
- reserve: Norenzayan & Shariff, “The origin and evolution of religious prosociality”

**Apr 7: Group living 5: Aggression and warfare**

- Buss ch. 10

**Apr 9: Group living 6: Conflict between the sexes**

- Buss ch. 11

**Apr 14: Group living 7: Status, prestige, and social dominance**

- Buss ch. 12
- watch deWaal “The surprising science of alph males” (for essay #6)
- annotated bibliography due, if writing a paper (5 references, with 2–3 sentences each summarizing its relevance to the paper)

**Apr 16: Evolutionary cultural psychology; Quiz #6**

- Buss pp. 394-400
- reserve: Mesoudi, "Cultural evolution: Integrating psychology, evolution and culture"

**Apr 21: Wrap-up and review**

- essay #6 due today
- Buss rest of ch. 13

Apr 24: **Final exam, 10:30 am**

Apr 25: **Term papers due**