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

- E-reserve readings (see course outline)

Class website

This course does not use Canvas. Information about the class can be found at the url at the top of the page. The website includes copies of the syllabus, studyguides, and other guidelines. Information on the syllabus handed out the first day of class may be updated 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).

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 turnitin.com; no hardcopy is needed. I will use their “grademark” feature to enter comments online, if you request comments. To submit the first review, set up an account with turnitin.com if you haven’t done so previously, and use the enrollment password “evpsych” and the class ID 23386987.
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…”), and write a brief (approximately 200-300 word) review of your analyses and what you learned from it, and submit to turnitin. 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?”

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
Department and University Policies

ADA Statement: The Americans with Disabilities Act. The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, (801) 581-5020. CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in an alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.

Addressing Sexual Misconduct: Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a Civil Rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801-581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801-581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585-2677(COPS).

Wellness Statement: Personal concerns such as stress, anxiety, relationship difficulties, depression, cross-cultural differences, etc., can interfere with a student’s ability to succeed and thrive at the University of Utah. For helpful resources contact the Center for Student Wellness (www.wellness.utah.edu; 801-581-7776).

Student Code: (Policy 6-400) All students are expected to maintain professional behavior in the classroom setting, according to the Student Code (regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.php). Students have specific rights in the classroom as detailed in S. II of the Code. The Code also specifies standards of behavior (S. III) and academic conduct (S. V). "Students must adhere to generally accepted standards of academic honesty, including but not limited to refraining from cheating, plagiarizing, research misconduct, misrepresenting one's work, and/or inappropriately collaborating" (S. VB). According to Faculty Rules and Regulations, it is the faculty responsibility to enforce responsible classroom behaviors. Students have the right to appeal such action to the Student Behavior Committee.

Incomplete Policy: An "I" will only be given for work not completed because of circumstances beyond the student's control, providing the student is passing the course and needs to complete 20% or less of the work. Valid reasons for an "I" grade include: (a) An illness (documented by a medical statement) that precludes the ability of the student to perform; (b) an accident or situation that prevents the student from physically being present (documentation may be required); (c) Extreme emotional or other mental circumstances that are severe enough to interfere with a student's normal academic performance. If you do receive an "I", do not register for the course again. You must complete the required work in the time agreed by you and the instructor. If the work is not completed within one year, the grade will change to an "E". Faculty will not accept additional work to change the grade after that one-year period. If a student has a problem with the course, please deal with it immediately. It is the student's responsibility to contact instructors and submit necessary forms.

Note: The syllabus is not a binding legal contract. It may be modified by the instructor when the student is given reasonable notice of the modification.