ANTH 199: Evolution of Warfare
CRN 16803

Instructor: Marcela Mendoza
Winter 2015: Tuesday & Thursday 4:00-5:20pm
Department of Anthropology, Condom Hall, Room 201

Course description

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to evolutionary perspectives on inter-group aggression and warfare in human societies using data from archeology, ethnography, and primatology. As first-year student, you will be provided with an engaging learning environment to discuss challenging ideas about lethal violence among human and chimpanzee groups.

We will review observations of aggression and peace-making among non-human primates. We will also study evidence of violence (cannibalism and warfare) among Paleolithic and Neolithic human populations looking at archeological sites, fossil remains, artifacts, and rock painting. We will discuss ethnographic accounts of raids, blood-revenge, and warfare among mobile hunter-gatherers. These so-called “Late Pleistocene–appropriate” foragers live in small, multifamily egalitarian bands where individuals may compete for mates and food, but are adamant about not allowing male competition to develop into the kind of alpha-male dominance behavior observed in primates.

To appreciate the value of contextualizing artifacts for interpreting the past, we will visit the UO Museum of Natural and Cultural History, seeking to relate the exhibits with the content of the seminar. You will be encouraged to engage in discussions by using evidence presented in class, making inferences on what you are learning, and reflecting on how the constructed models that we use to interpret evidence from the past may influence our interpretation of violence and warfare in the present—and the other way around, how the present may influence the interpretation of the past.

Learning Objectives

- **Introduce the first-year students to anthropological concepts** developed to understand prehistoric populations, their modes of subsistence, and levels of social complexity. These concepts are validated with data from archeology and ethnography.
- **Expose the students to evolutionary models** used in anthropology linking adaptation, inclusive fitness, food and information sharing, cooperation, and warfare/inter-group lethal violence. Using the lenses of evolutionary theory, many surprising insights get into clear focus. To understand why something turned out the way we see it, we will try to understand the processes that may have built it.
- **Encourage the students to apply evolutionary models to interpret various aspects of human behavior.** Although natural selection depends on random process, it is shaped by the environment in which each species struggles to survive. In a hyper-social species such as ours, the most important feature of the environment is our own society. So to the extent that people shape their own society, they determine the conditions of their own evolution.
Course structure

This 3-credit seminar meets twice a week. It requires from you (1) class attendance and engagement with the materials; (2) leading and also participating in small group discussions in class; (3) participating in a museum visit; (4) viewing and discussing an ethnographic film; and (5) submitting the following work: (i) seven written assignments, (ii) one report on the museum visit, and (iii) one essay due in the week of final exams.

Office Hours: The instructor will offer weekly office hours on Wednesdays from 4:00-5:00 pm in the Fishbowl area of the EMU. This option is available for all students, and can also serve as informal/imromptu study sessions for students who wish to meet with the instructor either individually or in small groups.

Tentative Seminar Outline

Week 1
Tuesday January 6 Class
In the first week of classes, the students will get to know one another, the instructor, and the subject matter. The instructor will introduce the focus of the seminar, organization, expectations, and requirements, including grading. In the first class, we will discuss evolutionary approaches and the type of reading and visual materials that support the arguments presented in the seminar.

Assignment 1: The first assignment will consist on (a) reviewing online materials on human evolution, (b) rating them for interesting educational content, and (c) explaining the reasons why you have ranked the websites in that way. Review four online human evolution websites choosing from the following five:

- Human beginnings’ project at bbc.co.uk
- UK Natural History Museum’s articles about human origins www.nhm.ac.uk
- Human evolution at www.pbs.org
- Becoming human online documentary from Arizona State University www.becominghuman.org
- Smithsonian Institution’s human origins program http://humanorigins.si.edu/

Give them a rate from one to four (1 is your first choice and 4 is the one you like the least) according to whether the content is interesting, valuable, up-to-date, and easy to understand. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My ranking</th>
<th>Interesting</th>
<th>Valuable</th>
<th>Up-to-date</th>
<th>Easy to understand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>bbc.co.uk</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nhm.ac.uk">www.nhm.ac.uk</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><a href="http://www.pbs.org">www.pbs.org</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><a href="http://humanorigins.si.edu">http://humanorigins.si.edu</a></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

This assignment counts for **20 points** of your final grade.
**Thursday January 8 Class**
In the second class, the students will explain their preferences about the online materials just reviewed. We will explore the level of previous knowledge and understanding that the students have on the topic of human evolution. The instructor will address the fundamentals of biological and cultural evolution in relation to the focus of the seminar, and the type of data that supports the arguments: primate behavior, archaeological remains (fossils, artifacts, and petroglyphs), and ethnographic records. The instructor will also present the prehistoric timeline: Paleolithic, Mesolithic, and Neolithic.

**Assignment 2:** Read Durrant’s article on collective violence, and answer the questions posted by the instructor. Bring your answers in hard copy to class. This assignment counts **20 points** for your final grade.

**Week 2**
**Tuesday January 13 Class**
For a variety of reasons, anthropologists and archaeologists have underreported warfare when studying indigenous people and prehistoric remains. Until recently, researchers have artificially “pacified the past” and expressed a pervasive bias against the possibility of prehistoric warfare. We will discuss the myth of the noble savage, and also present evolutionary reasons why everyday life was necessarily not completely dominated by violence and intergroup aggression. We will have small-group discussion in class on the evolutionary perspectives developed in Durrant’s article.

**Thursday January 15 Class**
Human “sociality” (the tendency to live in social groups forming communities) is rooted in various ways in tendencies that people may have inherited from their primate ancestors some 5 million years ago, and that have been adapted to the prevailing circumstances through time. Following the reading, we will discuss the dynamics of primate societies, the differences between chimpanzees and bonobos, and how their societies handle aggression and peacemaking. Collective violence is “a bond that separates humans and chimps from all other species.” However, if there is a human predisposition to socially approved aggression, it falls into a quite different category from that of individual aggression. We will discuss these and other challenging ideas in class, with your input from the assigned readings.

**Assignment 3:** Read Saladié’s article on intergroup cannibalism in the European Early Pleistocene, and answer the questions posted by the instructor. Bring your answers in hard copy to class. This assignment counts **20 points** for your final grade. Come prepared to ask some questions.

**Week 3**
**Tuesday January 20 Class**
How did human societies evolve from small groups, bonded by face-to-face cooperation, to huge anonymous societies of today? Clearly, humans have evolved the ability to live and cooperate in huge groups of genetically unrelated individuals. Anthropologists have proposed theories to explain the emergence of large-scale societies based on factors such as agriculture, population growth, warfare, economic specialization, and long-distance trade. We will discuss evidence of
cannibalism in the past as a possible indicator of intergroup aggression (a proxy for warfare). The discussion will focus on documented cases of violence in prehistory (e.g., cannibalism among early humans *Homo sapiens* and *Homo sapiens neardenthalensis*).

**Thursday January 22 Class**

We will revisit our discussion on field observations of aggression and conflict resolution among non-human primates, and the evolutionary explanations of these behaviors, then will move on to various interpretations of so-called “primitive war” and archaeological reports that have either “pacified” the human past with no reference to violence and warfare, or over-used invasion and bloodshed to explain cultural change in prehistory.

**Assignment 4:** Read Fry & Söderberg’s article on lethal aggression in mobile forager bands, and answer the questions posted by the instructor. Bring your answers in hard copy to class. This assignment counts **20 points** for your final grade.

**Week 4**

**Tuesday January 27 Class**

Students will be introduced to additional frames of reference based on levels of social complexity (bands, tribes, chiefdoms, and states), and type of subsistence (hunter-gatherers, horticulturalists, pastoralist, agriculturalists). As we consider case studies of hunter-gatherers, we can ask, does an evolutionary cost-benefit model offer insights about conflict in mobile band societies? Second, do humans at this band level of social organization show patterns of restraint during conflict that is similar to those in other species? Third, does the concept on inclusive fitness apply to conflictive situations? You will be asked to provide input based on the materials just read.

**Thursday January 29 Class**

This class we will view Dead Birds (1961), a classic ethnographic film by Robert Gardner on the Dani Papuans of West New Guinea (attendance required). We will discuss the evolution of language, religion, and reciprocity as three important elements of the glue that holds human societies together; and continue developing the ideas of reciprocity and social thrust (an ability to calculate the cost and benefits of cooperation) that underpin our social life.

**Assignment 5:** Read Wilson’s article on lethal aggression in *Pan*, and answer the questions posted by the instructor. Bring your answers in hard copy to class. This assignment counts **20 points** for your final grade.

**Week 5**

**Tuesday February 3 Class**

Evolutionary biologists have developed a reasonably good account of how social behavior may have emerged in groups of closely related individuals in a theory about what is known as inclusive fitness. Another theory called reciprocal altruism, explains how behavior could have evolved for helping even unrelated people (tit-for-tat strategy), including the instinct for reciprocity and cheater-detection mechanisms. We will have small-group discussion in class.
**Thursday February 5 Class**
Invited speaker Dr. Michelle Scalise Sugiyama, a faculty at the UO Department of Anthropology, will talk about her research on fitness costs of warfare for women (**attendance required**).

**Week 6**
**Tuesday February 10 Class**
In this class, we will sum-up the topics we have been discussing in the previous weeks, addressing the students’ questions. We are also going to plan our visit to the museum exhibit on Thursday February 12th. The students will receive guidelines to write the report on the visit to the museum. We will have a conversation about the challenges and rewards of writing the final essay for this seminar. We will learn from one another’s experiences, and discuss strategies to continue to improve our essay-writing skills.

**Thursday February 12 Class**
Visit to the UO Museum of Natural and Cultural History (**attendance required**). Meet the instructor at the entrance, participate in the guided visit with museum staff, and gather in the public exhibit hall for final comments.

**Assignment 6:** Write a report on the museum visit (three-page long). Follow the instructions you will receive from the instructor at the end of the visit (you will also find these instructions posted on Blackboard). Bring this assignment to class next week. It counts for **20 points** for your final grade.

**Week 7**
**Tuesday February 17 Class**
The discussion this day will focus on what the class learned during the visit to the museum exhibit, and whether learning from objects and visuals is similar/dissimilar to learning from the authors’ arguments in books and articles. You will be asked to provide input on what you saw. We will discuss individual experiences, formulate questions and provide answers.

**Thursday February 19 Class**
The discussion will be centered on violence among hunters and early farmers in the European upper Paleolithic and Neolithic period (according to Chapter 1, pp.1-26 of Wileman’s book on *Warfare in Northern Europe before the Romans*). Most human remains bearing projectile-inflicted injuries date from the end of the Neolithic (the period associated with the first farming communities). However, this may not indicate that violence increased overtime, but that the population also increased and funerary rituals preserving the corpses were practiced more often.

**Assignment 7:** Read Chapter 2 (pp.27-49) in Wileman’s book on *Warfare in Northern Europe before the Romans*, and answer the questions posted by the instructor. Bring your answers in hard copy to class. This assignment counts for **20 points** for your final grade.
**Week 8**  
**Tuesday February 24 Class**  
We will review the chronology of the stone ages and metal ages in Europe, and interpretations of warfare across northern Europe. This class will focus on archaeology and warfare, methods and indicators of war. We will compare these interpretations with what we learned about evolutionary theory. We will discuss these insights in small groups and share the students’ views.

**Thursday February 26 Class**  
In this class, we will continue focusing on archaeological indicators of warfare. We will compare these interpretations with what we learned about evolutionary theory. People commonly assume that our species has evolved very little since prehistoric times. Yet new studies using information from populations around the globe suggest that the pace of human evolution increased with the invention of agriculture and urban life. We will continue to review evidence of violence in Europe. The students will discuss in small groups their opinions and insights from the reading materials.

**Assignment 8:** Read Chapter 3 (pp. 50-73) in Wileman’s book on *Warfare in Northern Europe before the Romans*, and answer the questions posted by the instructor. Bring your answers in hard copy to class. This assignment counts for **20 points** for your final grade.

**Week 9**  
**Tuesday March 3 Class**  
Guided visit to the Knight Library conducted by Miriam Rigby, social sciences librarian, who will introduce the students to anthropological resources available through the library, in preparation for the final essay (attendance required).

**Thursday March 5 Class**  
In this class, we will address the final essay. We will discuss in-depth the guidelines for the essay, and the instructor will provide answers to your questions, also offering feedback on the students’ ideas. We will also discuss violence in the Bronze Age in northern Europe (in Chapter 4, pp. 74-96 of Wileman’s book on *Warfare in Northern Europe before the Romans*).

**Week 10**  
**Tuesday March 10 Class**  
We will discuss the rise of war in northern Europe during the Bronze and Iron Ages (Chapters 5 and 6, pp.97-143 in Wileman’s book on *Warfare in Northern Europe before the Romans*), and also review Wileman’s conclusion to her book (pp.184-186). The students will get feedback on any drafts or ideas for the final essay that they may have.

**Thursday March 12 Class**  
The discussion will review the seminar’s focus on evolutionary models of violence among mobile hunter-gatherers, including the cost-benefit of aggression, restraint, inclusive fitness, population density, paucity of resources, and territoriality. The students will be encouraged to express their insights and evaluate the course content, suggesting improvements and modifications to benefit the learning experience of future first-year students interested in the topic.
The final essay is due on **Wednesday March 18** (during the week of final exams) **at 12:30pm**. Bring a hard copy of your essay to class. The instructor will be waiting for you in Condom Hall, Room 201. This essay counts for **40 points** towards your final grade.

**Course requirements**

Students are required to read one book, one book chapter, and four academic journal articles. The required book is available at the UO bookstore; the other materials are posted on Blackboard.


**Grading structure**

You should accumulate 200 points to obtain an A in this class, earned as it follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Number of Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seven written assignments</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4 questions per assignment, 5 points per question = 20 each)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One museum visit report (three-page long)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final essay (five-page long)</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>200</strong></td>
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You are required to attend all the classes, view an ethnographic film, and participate in group visits to (a) the UO Museum on Natural and Cultural History and (b) the Knight Library. This seminar requires seven written assignments, one three-page long report connecting the museum exhibits with the topic of the seminar, and one essay (all due in class on hard copy on the date indicated in the syllabus). A small group of students will take turns to formulate questions and answers on the content of the readings, and leading the class discussion. Students who have a justified/justifiable reason for missing the due date for an assignment will be offered extra work to make up for a failing grade. There is no make-up date for the final essay. To support your
essay, you can refer to the assigned readings, notes on the instructor’s presentations, and also discussions that happened in class. The instructor will be available for consultation during weekly office hours and via e-mail. Comprehensive guidelines for all assignments will be posted on Blackboard. You will be encouraged to consult with the instructor as often as you need it. You will receive individual feedback on any draft for your work that you may choose to submit before the deadline.