ANTH 610 (CRN26971) Topics in Archaeology
Tuesday 6:00–8:50 pm, Winter 2015
Condon Hall 313

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Office Hour: Tuesday 12:00–1:50 pm

Description and Objectives

The course is a seminar for graduate students from all sub-disciplines of anthropology. Throughout the course, we will focus on understanding the diverse human behaviors that interact with environments and ecosystems, utilizing anthropological, archaeological, and biological data. Main theoretical focus is historical ecology and niche construction. Niche construction is a universal behavior, exhibited across a broad range of organisms that choose, regulate, construct, and even destroy important components of their own and each other’s environments. In that sense, humans are the most proficient niche constructors with their cultural capacity, active social learning tendency, and multi-generational transmission of learned behaviors. Niche construction is observable, intuitive and thus provides a new conceptual framework that can integrate the biological and cultural realms of human evolution. The course covers wide geographical and temporal ranges to accommodate diverse interests of students in the class. By the end of this course, students will be able to identify multiple perspectives on human cultural evolution; to explain long-term human-environmental interactions with examples from past and/or current times; and to achieve critical skills of assessing the data and theories on cultural evolution.

Readings

The course readings (PDF) will be posted in Blackboard>Course Documents>Readings.

Assignments and Grading Scheme

The students will submit eight weekly critical reviews (1,000 words or so) for readings of the week, starting from Week 2. Besides the main readings, you may select one or two more articles relevant to the main readings, which can be one of the supplementary readings listed below or your own findings. You will upload the review and your choice of reading (if any) in Backboard>Critical Review folder at least a day before each class. This will give me time to access your reviews and to use your perspectives in class discussion. I expect to see some of the following aspects from your readings:

- Author’s main arguments and key concepts: how are these terms/concepts defined and how are they different or unique from other works (if applicable)?
- Explicit and/or implicit assumptions: can these assumptions be justified based on data?
- Comparative views: what other readings/authors can you compare to the work for similarity or differences in perspectives and a way to interpret data?
- Perceived weakness in arguments: How does the author(s) propose to overcome perceived shortcomings? How do others criticize the problems?
- Can you compare the topics from the readings of the week to those from the previous weeks?
- Questions: Are there any concepts, methods applied, or interpretation unclear to you?
- References cited

You will prepare discussion on your choice of subject but related to the course topics in the last class on March 10. I recommend you to consult me for the topic and reading by the end of Week 8. Email me one article either from the supplementary readings or your own choice and one or two discussion topics related to the reading by March 3. This will give the rest of us to prepare the class. Bring a short slide presentation (within10 min).
Grade Scheme

Participation 25%
8 Critical readings 70% (5% for the first two and 10% for the rest)
Discussion/Presentation (Mar 10) 5%

A+ 97% or higher; A 93% or higher; A- 90% or higher
B+ 87% or higher; B 83% or higher; B- 80% or higher
C+ 77% or higher; C 73% or higher; C- 70% or higher
D+ 67% or higher; D 63% or higher; D- 60% or higher
F below 60%

Active participation is a key for completing this course successfully. Absence in class will affect your understanding of the course materials and your grade. If you have to miss class due to an accident, family emergency, or contagious illness, please notify me before the class.

Courtesy and Professionalism

You can use your electronic devices to check your notes on readings. Just be sure that you will pay attention to the fellow students while they are expressing their views, rather than staring at the gadgets.

Plagiarism is a serious academic offence. Read carefully the following guideline to avoid it: http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/?tab=5

If you have an accessibility issue that potentially affects your performance in the class, please notify me at the first class and contact the ‘Accessible Education Center’: http://aec.uoregon.edu

Weekly Schedules and Readings

Week 1 (Jan 6)
• Introductory survey to the perspectives on human-environmental relations, changes and evolution: Human/Cultural Niche Construction, Historical Ecology, and Human Behavioral Ecology
**Supplementary readings:**

  - Read pp. 1-11.

**Week 2 (Jan 13)**

- Theoretical backgrounds: Evolutionism in anthropology and human culture

**Supplementary readings:**


**Week 3 (Jan 20)**

- Introduction to Human/Cultural Niche Construction

**Supplementary readings:**


**Week 4 (Jan 27)**

- Perspectives on foraging: Broad Spectrum Resource Strategy, Optimal Foraging Theory

  - You already read this in Week 1. Review through your notes and class discussion on this article.

Supplementary readings:
  - Most of you probably read this classic reference, but re-reading will help you understanding the assigned readings for the week.

Week 5 (Feb 3)
- Neolithic Revolution or Evolution? Current studies on domestication
- Debates on OFT and HNC application to agricultural origins
- Gremillion, K.J. et al., 2014. Reply to Smith: on distinguishing between models, hypotheses, and theoretical frameworks, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the USA 111.
- Gremillion, K.J. et al., 2014. Reply to Zeder: maintaining a diverse scientific toolkit is not an act of faith, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the USA 111.

Supplementary readings:
- Smith, B.D., 2011. General patterns of niche construction and the management of ‘wild’ plant and animal resources by small-scale pre-industrial societies. Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society...

Week 6 (Feb 10)
• Comparing case studies on foraging and farming in evolutionary perspectives

Supplementary readings:
• Crawford, G.W., 2012. Early rice exploitation in the lower Yangzi valley: what are we missing. The Holocene 22, 613-621.

Week 7 (Feb 17)
• Evolutionary and socio-ecological perspectives on learning and cultural inheritance, cooperation/competition, and social complexity/inequality
• Fuentes, A., 2010. Niche construction through cooperation: a nonlinear dynamics contribution to


Supplementary readings:


Week 8 (Feb 24)

• Evolutionary, ecological perspectives on landscape modification by fire


• Zong, Y. et al., 2007. Fire and flood management of coastal swamp enabled first rice paddy cultivation in east China. Nature 449, 459-463. doi:10.1038/nature06135

Supplementary readings:


**Week 9 (Mar 3)**

• Island ecology and cultural evolution


**Supplementary readings:**


**Week 10 (Mar 10)**

• Student leading discussion and presentation.

• *Topics and readings can be modified.*