ANTH 330: HUNTER-GATHERERS

Instructor: Dr. Michelle Scalise Sugiyama
Email: mscalise@uoregon.edu
Office: 329 Condon Hall
Office hours: by email appointment

Course Content: For most of human evolution, survival has depended on what could be acquired through the hunting, fishing, or gathering of wild resources. Thus, the qualities that make us human were shaped by the recurrent features of the physical and social environments our ancestors encountered as foragers. To fully understand what it means to be human one must therefore understand our foraging legacy. While no modern hunter-gatherer group is a “living fossil” of our evolutionary past, collectively these groups provide insight into the adaptive problems our ancestors faced, the adaptations that selection produced in response to these problems, and how these adaptations yield different solutions in response to differing local environments.

This class surveys a diverse set of societies that survived as hunter-gatherers into the modern era. We will explore how different hunter-gatherer groups interact with their physical and social environment in the process of acquiring and sharing foods, allocating labor, raising children, and deciding where to live and when to move, largely from an evolutionary and ecological perspective. The class attempts to achieve a balance between a review of ethnographic information about hunter-gatherer groups, the scientific theories for understanding both recurrent and variable aspects of people’s behavior across these groups, and the data used to support or falsify these hypotheses.

Course Goals: By the end of the term, students should be able to
1) define the basic features of the human ecological niche, and cite examples of these features from a range of hunter-gatherer cultures
2) understand how variation in habitat produces variation in the basic features of the human ecological niche
3) understand the human ecological niche as a set of adaptive problems and our species as a set of adaptations that evolved in response to them
4) understand the role that information and cultural transmission play in our species’ ecological niche
5) identify features of the human ecological niche and human cognitive design that distinguish humans zoologically from other animals

Be Forewarned: Continuing in the class indicates that you have read and understood the following two statements, and agree to the terms they describe.
1. This course examines (1) the way people behave, (2) hypotheses advanced to explain human behavior, and (3) data relevant to testing these hypotheses. This course is not about how you, I, or anyone else believes people ought to behave, or what is morally right or wrong. To confuse these is to commit an error so common that it has been given a name: the naturalistic fallacy. If you cannot distinguish between these intellectually, you should seriously consider taking a different course.
2. This course uses an evolutionary, ecological, and scientific approach to human behavior. While you do not have to accept evolutionary theories of human behavior, you are required to understand them, answer questions about them, and apply them to the readings and films. If you feel you cannot do this, you should find a different course.

**Office Hours:** I regularly check my email twice a day, once in the morning and again in the early evening. (I often check it at other times as well, but these are unpredictable.) This means that if you email me after 7:00 p.m., I probably won’t see it until the next morning, and if you email me in the late morning or early afternoon, I probably won’t see it until that evening. If you feel that you need to meet with me in person, email me to schedule an appointment.

**Technical Difficulties:** With online courses, technical failures inevitably occur. As I cannot monitor the course site continually, I depend on you to notify me of any tech issues as soon as they come to your attention. Don’t panic if I don’t respond to your email immediately (see **Office Hours**). When tech failures occur, deadlines will be extended as appropriate.

**Students With Disabilities:** Appropriate accommodations will be provided for students with documented disabilities. If you anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please contact me asap and send me a notification letter from Disability Services outlining your accommodations.

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**Course Requirements**

**Readings:** To access readings and all other class materials, click on “Weekly Lessons” in the left-hand Blackboard menu, then go to the appropriate week’s lesson (see **Schedule of Readings**, below). The readings are scientific articles and chapters from ethnographies and edited volumes about important topics in hunter-gatherer research. Most of what you read will be primary scientific research presented by those who conduct it, as opposed to a broad overview that might be found in a textbook. Because lectures are designed to explicate and review key points of the assigned texts, you are expected to do the reading before you listen to the lectures.

**Films:** Films are used to illustrate core concepts where verbal description (i.e., lecture, text) is inadequate. These include: (1) the conditions and challenges of day-to-day forager life; (2) the extensive knowledge and skill sets that scaffold even the most basic foraging tasks; and (3) the degree to which humans are dependent on cooperation for survival.

**Grading:**
1. Your course grade will be based on your performance on the Quizzes (25%), Film Worksheets (25%), Midterm Exam (25%), and Final Exam (25%). Grading is done on a straight percentage scale so theoretically there is no reason that everyone cannot get As.
2. Quizzes are timed, multiple-choice, online tests. Each quiz covers the reading assignments and lectures for that week, and is designed to reinforce core concepts and important research findings and reward you for doing the reading on time. Film worksheets are short-answer assignments designed to test your ability to identify key features of hunter-gatherer life and apply core concepts presented in the course. No late work or make-ups allowed (for exceptions, see **Technical Difficulties**).
3. Exams are online, timed, multiple-choice, and comprehensive. They test your knowledge of key features of the foraging niche, important ethnographic and ecological features of specific forager groups studied, theoretical explanations/approaches used to understand specific aspects of forager life, and the results of tests of these theories. No late work allowed without Approved Proof of Legitimate Reason for missing the exam due date.

**Academic Honesty:** academic misconduct is a violation of the UO Student Conduct Code, which prohibits the “act of cheating, fabrication, and plagiarism. Examples: looking at another person’s exam, making up lab results, and failing to cite sources in a paper.” Listening to lectures, watching films, and studying with other students in the class is allowed and encouraged, but all tests and assignments must be done independently: all work submitted for this course must be your own and produced exclusively for this class. Any student who engages in academic dishonesty risks failing the class.

**SCHEDULE OF READINGS**

**Week 1: Evolutionary Theory**
Sugiyama 1996 “Introduction” to *In Search of the Adapted Mind: A Study of Human Cognitive Adaptations Among the Shiwiar of Ecuador and the Yora of Peru*
Lee & DeVore 1968 “Problems in the study of hunters and gatherers”
**Film:** *Pygmies of the Rain Forest*

**Week 2: Human Life History**
Leonard et al. 2007 “Energetics and the evolution of brain size in early Homo”
Hrdy 2005 “Comes the child before the man: how cooperative breeding and prolonged dependence shaped human potentials”
**Film:** *Did Cooking Make Us Human?*

**Week 3: Cooperation & Conflict Management**
Hill & Kaplan 1985 “Food sharing among Ache foragers: tests of explanatory hypotheses” (to p. 239 only!)
Boehm 1993 “Egalitarian behavior and reverse dominance hierarchy” (p. 227 to top of p. 236 only!)
Marshall 1976 “Sharing, talking, and giving: relief of social tensions among the !Kung”
**Film:** *Lamalera: A Whaling Village in Eastern Indonesia*

**Week 4: Subsistence & Settlement Patterns**
Lee 1984 “Subsistence: foraging for a living”
Tonkinson 1978 “Subsistence in a most marginal habitat”
Turnbull 1983 “The forest world”
Downs 1966 “The land,” “Using the land”
**Film:** *Life and Death of the Classic Lillooet Culture*

**Week 5: Information Acquisition & Exchange**
Mithen 1990 “The ethnography of hunter-gatherer decision making”
Film: The Art of Tracking
MIDTERM EXAM

Week 6: Kinship & Marriage
Lee 1984 “Kinship and social organization”
Tonkinson 1978 “The social imperative”
Apostolou 2007 “Sexual selection under parental choice: the role of parents in the evolution of human mating”

Week 7: Health & Subsistence Risk
Sugiyama 2004 “Illness, injury and disability among Shiwiar forager-horticulturalists”
Gurven et al. 2000 “It’s a wonderful life: signaling generosity among the Ache of Paraguay”
Minc 1986 “Scarcity and survival: the role of oral tradition in mediating subsistence crises”

Week 8: Resource Management & Wayfinding
Lewis 1982 “Fire technology and resource management in Aboriginal North America and Australia”
Tonkinson 1978 Excerpts from “The Spiritual Imperative” (pp. 14-19), “The Religious Life” (pp. 87-94), “Songlines” (pp. 104-105) and “Interrelationship of Myth, Ritual, and Songline” (p. 105)
Film: The Desert People

Week 9: Hunter-Gatherer Childhood
Bird & Bliege Bird 2005 “Martu children’s hunting strategies in the Western Desert, Australia”
Blurton Jones et al. 1994 “Differences between Hadza and !Kung children's work: original affluence or practical reason?” (pp. 189-205 only!)
Gurven et al. 2006 “How long does it take to become a proficient hunter? Implications for the evolution of delayed growth”
Film: Cree Hunters of Mistassini

Week 10: Cultural Transmission
Gwich’in 1997 Gwich’in Words About the Land, “Vadzaih (Caribou)”
Blurton-Jones & Konner 1976 “!Kung knowledge of animal behavior”
Hewlett & Cavalli-Sforza 1986 “Cultural transmission among Aka pygmies”
Film: The Human Spark, Part I

Week 11
FINAL EXAM