Psychology 3F03E Evolution & Human Behaviour June-August, 2009

Where & When: MDCL Rm 1309, Tuesdays & Thursdays, 18:30-21:30, June 23–Aug 4, 2009

Instructor: Dr. Marian Wong <wongma@mcmaster.ca>

Course Content
This course concerns the relevance of contemporary evolutionary theories and knowledge for understanding human psychology and behaviour, especially social behaviour. The field is interdisciplinary: students will read and hear about research by psychologists, anthropologists, economists, demographers, sociologists, health scientists, and biologists.

While developing an appreciation of the ways in which evolutionary thinking can inform the study of human psychology and behaviour, you will also gain experience in evaluating primary research reports. Ideally, you will thereby acquire a more critical grasp of the relationships among research methods, data, and interpretations, and this critical capability will assist you in constructing a research-based project at the end of the course.

Required Readings
The required readings, listed on syllabus pages 2-3 below, are articles and excerpts from both primary research literature and more elementary sources. You are responsible for all of these readings, which can be accessed online through the McMaster library e-journals portal or via the course web site. Also listed below (syllabus page 3 bottom) is additional reading that is not required but may be helpful.

Assignments and Grading
Grades will be assigned on the basis of (1) a 3-hour registrar-scheduled final exam, worth 60 % of the total grade, (2) one mid-term test, to be held in class on July 7, worth 30 % of the total grade, and (3) one 5-minute oral presentation of a potential research-based project, worth 10% of the total grade. The test and the final exam may include multiple choice and/or short answer and/or essay questions. A deferred final exam will not necessarily be of exactly the same format as the original final exam.

The mid-term test will assess knowledge and comprehension of lectures prior to the test night, and of assigned readings up to and including those scheduled for the test night. There will be no "make-up tests". If you miss the test without documentation acceptable to your faculty’s Dean of Studies, your term mark will be based on the other two; if you do file suitable documentation with your Dean of Studies, your grade will be based on the test and exam that you completed, with appropriate re-weighting. For further information about missed work, medical exemptions (including the McMaster medical certificate), exam conflicts, and deferred exams, see <http://www.science.mcmaster.ca/~associatedean/services/services.html>

Grades will be computed out of 100 points and converted to a letter grade as follows:
70-72 = B- 73-76 = B 77-79 = B+ 80-84 = A- 85-89 = A 90-100 = A+

The instructor reserves the right to adjust final marks up or down, on an individual basis, in light of special circumstances and/or the student's total performance in the course.

e-mail
All students should have McMaster e-mail accounts, by which we can communicate with you. Some students find it more convenient to receive e-mail at another address and we will try to accommodate their requests, but we cannot be responsible for messages that are not
Policy Reminder
Your attention is drawn to the Statement on Academic Ethics and the Senate Resolutions on Academic Dishonesty as found in the Senate Policy Statements distributed at registration and available in the Senate Office. Any student who infringes one of these resolutions will be treated according to the published policy. Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences, e.g. a grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, specifically Appendix 3, at <http://www.mcmaster.ca/univsec/policy/AcademicIntegrity.pdf>.

Schedule of Topics and Required Readings
We do not anticipate making revisions to the following schedule. If, however, unforeseen circumstances necessitate change(s), you will be notified both in class and by announcement email. All the readings assigned below will be available in that folder; they should be read in preparation for (= before) the class for which they are assigned (that is, read items 1 and 2 before the class of June 25th, etc.).

Class 1, June 23rd. Introduction to Psychology 3F3: Evolution and human behaviour.

Class 2, June 25th. Optimal foraging.

Class 3, June 30th. Human life history.

Class 4, July 2nd. Sexual selection and mating systems

Class 5, July 7th. Sexual selection and intrasexual conflict
Night of mid-term test
Class 6, July 9th. Sexual selection and mate choice

Class 7, July 14th. Parent-offspring conflict

Class 8, July 16th. Cooperation amongst kin

Class 9, July 21st. Cooperation amongst non-kin

Class 10, July 23rd. The adaptive significance of individual and cultural variation

Class 11, July 28th Preparation of presentations for research-based projects.

Class 12, July 30th Oral presentations of research-based projects.

Class 13, August 4th Final exam.

General Reference Material Related to this Course (not required)