Psychology Neuroscience and Behaviour 4R03 – Special Topics in Animal Behaviour

Instructor: David Feinberg

TA’s: Sari Isenstein & Erin McCallum

Location: BSB 238

Time: 11:30-2:20

September 8, 2014- December 1, 2014

Extension 28664

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Course description and objectives: This term’s 4th year 4R03 seminar course will focus on the evolution of the human voice. In this course we examine the fossil record, endocrinology, bioacoustics, perception, and sexual selection pressures surrounding the evolution of the human voice. We will examine theoretical papers and research reports that integrate evolutionary psychology, evolutionary biology, behavioural ecology, psychology, and anthropology, in order to gain a broad perspective.

Registrants are expected to be familiar with the basic principles underlying evolution. For the first half of the course, each week we will discuss set of papers on that week’s topic. During the second half of the course, students will present a grant proposal that proposes to examine a novel hypothesis about one of the topics covered in the first half of the course.

This course is designed to help develop effective, transferable techniques among many facets of scientific research such as finding and evaluating relevant literature on adaptive mate preferences, identifying gaps in our current understanding of mate preferences, developing new ways to fill these gaps, and formulating them in such a way as to share them with a group of scientific peers.

Grades:

Final grades are based upon the written grant proposal (35%), in-class oral presentation of the grant proposal (25%), class participation (10%), critique of presentation (5%), and reports on reading (25%). Failure of any section will result in failure in the course. All coursework will be submitted electronically at least 1 hour before class begins. Late submissions will be lowered an entire letter grade for each day they are late. In this
respect, each “day” begins as soon as the deadline has past. The instructors reserve the right to adjust final marks up or down, on an individual basis, in the light of special circumstances and/or the individual's total performance in the course. Students will be assigned a grade from the McMaster University Grading Scale based on an overall assessment by the professor on the work submitted. To pass the course, the student will achieve a passing grade on all graded portions of the course (including class participation).

We use the McMaster Grading Scale:

- 90-100 = A+
- 77-79 = B+
- 67-69 = C+
- 57-59 = D+
- < 50 = F

- 85-89 = A
- 73-76 = B
- 63-66 = C
- 53-56 = D
- 80-84 = A-
- 70-72 = B-
- 60-62 = C-
- 50-52 = D-

**Papers**

The foundation of the course is reading and discussing papers. You will be given full citations for each paper to read. You are expected to find each paper at McMaster’s libraries, read it, and be prepared to discuss it in class. You are also expected to find and read one unassigned paper each week on each topic. Each week you will submit a 1-page report on the papers you read. The report will demonstrate your understanding of the papers by explaining the broader topic that the papers fall into, how each paper you read addresses that topic theoretically and/or methodologically (always both when both are available), and how that changes our perspective on the broader topic.

**Grant Proposals**

The class will break down into teams to investigate one of the prior reading topics in more depth. Depending on class size, in-class grant proposal presentations will be either by individual, or by group. Each student will be randomly assigned to critique another student’s presentation. Each member of the team will produce their own unique written grant proposal. Briefly, grant proposals will consist of a summary, a literature review, the goals of the proposed project, the methods that will be used to address the goals, and the potential impact of the goals. Further details will follow early in the term.

**Office Hours**

After a short break after class, starting at 15:00-16:00 on Mondays in Psychology 407 or by appointment.
Communication Policy

E-mail communications must originate from your designated McMaster e-mail account (i.e. mcmaster.ca account). Should we need to communicate with you about individual matters, the e-mail will be sent to your mcmaster.ca account. You should monitor this account regularly. E-mail sent from third-party providers (yahoo, hotmail, cogeco, sympatico, etc.) will not be received. We have this policy for three reasons: 1. Reduce the amount of incoming spam to our accounts; 2. Ensure that we know with whom we are communicating; 3. Teach the professional use of e-mail. Please note that instructors cannot return long distance telephone calls. Please consider that email is a formal means of communication. You are expected address your emails to the instructor formally, use coherent compete sentences, and should be signed with your name and student number. We expect you to communicate with us at the university level, using proper language in your communications.

The professor reserves the right to change any and all course requirements and policies if the need should arise. Any change in the course requirements will be posted on the webpage and the details will be announced in class. Any concerns about announced changes should be addressed with the professor as soon as the changes are announced. Problems with the final exam schedule must be addressed to the Office of the Registrar.

Missed Work Policy

The MSAF do not excuse you from doing your work in this course. Should you be absent on your presentation day, and have the relevant documentation, you will give your presentation to the instructor and TA’s on a different day, in class if possible, or arranged individually if not. All other assignments are to be submitted digitally and thus are not excusable with the MSAF.

Academic Integrity:
Attention is drawn to 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. Any instance of Plagiarism will be dealt with in the most severe terms allowable by the Senate Policy on such matters. You may not record lectures without prior permission from the instructor. You may not post any recordings of any lecture on the internet. The penalty for posting any audio, video, or photograph (digital or otherwise) of anything that happens in during any class to the internet is immediate failure of the course.
Reading List

Read these papers plus one of your choosing on these topics and be prepared to discuss them in class each week. They are all available for free at the McMaster Library website. There is no textbook for this course.

Week 2: Anatomy and Bioacoustics


Week 3: The Fossil Record and the voice


Week 4: Endocrinology and the voice


Week 5: Voice Perception


Week 6: Nonverbal Vocal Communication 1


Week 7: Nonverbal Vocal Communication 2


back to the forefront in understanding nonhuman primate vocal signaling. Evolutionary Anthropology: Issues, News, and Reviews, 10(2), 58-71.

**Week 8: Sexual Selection**
