

Evolutionary Psychology, Cognitive Archaeology, and Psychological Prehistory



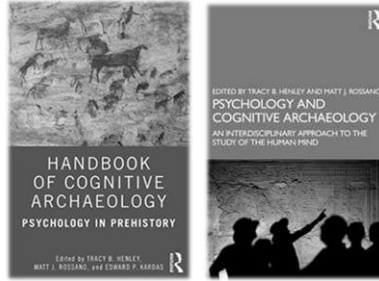
Course Description: This course is PSY 325, Evolutionary Psychology; Fall 2026

Text: There is no required Text to buy, but I will post several chapters for folks to read and you will need to secure the book you choose for your final paper

The Basics: Keep in mind that a syllabus sometimes shifts a little as a course unfolds. I say that by way of noting the importance of class attendance, as you will be held responsible for any change in plans announced in class. The other basic admonition every syllabus must include is that cheating (broadly defined) is not allowed. In this class **that absolutely does include the use of AI technology** to write part or all of your assignments. Or, as the university likes me to say: "All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment (see Student's Guide Handbook, Policies and Procedures, Conduct)." And, note that "Students requesting accommodations for disabilities must go through the Academic Support Committee. For more information, please contact the Director of Disability Resources & Services, Gee Library, Room 132, (903) 886-5835." Last: Only qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M-Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, even license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

Course Format: Most days I will lecture, but following the readings we will have a discussion (see below). Demonstrating that you did the reading by taking part will be an important component of your grade.

Assignments: There are no Tests. All students need to write a "glorified book report." I am not a word-counter, but these should be roughly "10 pages" in terms of depth/detail. The book should be from the list below. Additionally, you will also make a ~15 minute presentation around the end of the term over that book. Last – there will be several class periods where you will be expected to take part in a class discussion over the readings as assigned for that day.



Readings to Pick From

- Boyd, B. (2009). *On the Origin of Stories*.
- Boyer, P. (2018). *Minds make Societies*.
- Brown, D. (1991). *Human Universals*.
- Cauvin, J. (2000). *The Birth of the Gods and the Origins of Agriculture*.
- Clark, A. (2008). *Supersizing the Mind*.
- Donald, M. (1991). *Origins of the Modern Mind*.
- Donald, M. (2001). *A Mind so Rare*.
- Dunbar, R. (2010) *How Many Friends Does One Person Need?*
- Gamble, C., Gowlett, J & Dunbar, R. (2014). *Thinking Big: How the Evolution of Social Life Shaped the Human Mind*.
- Gottschall, J. (2012). *The Storytelling Animal*.
- Graeber, D. & Wengrow, D. (2021). *The Dawn of History*.
- Hayden, B. (2018). *The Power of Ritual in Prehistory*.
- Henrich, J. (2016). *The Secret of Our Success*
- Hodder, I. (2010). *Religion in the Emergence of Civilization*.
- Hodder, I. (2020). *Consciousness, Creativity, and Self at the Dawn of Settled Life*
- Hutchins, E. (1995). *Cognition in the Wild*.
- LeDoux, J. (2019). *The Deep History of Ourselves*.
- Malafouris, L. (2013). *How Things Shape the Mind*.
- Mithen, S. (2003). *After the Ice: A Global Human History 20000-5000 BC*.
- Mithen, S. (1996). *The Prehistory of the Mind*.
- Norenzayan, A. (2013). *Big Gods*.
- Renfrew, C. (2007). *Prehistory*.
- Renfrew, C & Zubrow, E. (1994). *The Ancient Mind*.
- Sterelny, K. (2021). *The Pleistocene Social Contract*.
- Sterelny, K. (2012). *The Evolved Apprentice*.
- Watkins, T. (2023). *Becoming Neolithic*.
- Wynn, T. & Coolidge, F. (2022). *An Introduction to Evolutionary Cognitive Archaeology*.

Note – Most of these books are actually fairly inexpensive, but they can also be obtained through the library

Avuncular Advice: Attend class – most of the material is from the lecture. Read what is **required** and as far in advance of the due date as you can.

Grades: Everybody starts with an A. Do what is asked (**attend**, do the readings, etc) and you'll surely keep it. The paper and presentation, as well as your participation (attending, taking part in discussions, etc) are the two primary sources for your grade.

The Instructor: Dr. Tracy B. Henley, as drawn by a student from many years ago. That student (Marshall Ramsey), by the way, went on to be a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize.



Office Hours: You are welcome to drop by and speak with me at any time that I am in my office – which should be most of every MWF. Beyond that, you can see me before/after class to schedule a meeting. Or, you can always reach me at tracy.henley@etamu.edu



Schedule of Events: Do all the required readings by the date shown.

8/21/F

Review of Syllabus

I. Foundations

8/24/M The Big Picture

What is Evolutionary Psychology, Cognitive Archaeology and Psychological Pre-History?

Evolution and Religion

Evolution and Culture

8/26/W History and Theory

Darwin and Wallace

Beyond Darwin: Other Key Figures

8/28/F History and Theory continued...

Core Concepts

Criticisms: “Just So Stories” and the overuse of animal and “modern” examples

Reading – PCA Chapter 1 by Rossano & Henley

8/31/M Evolutionary Basics

The Basics of Evolution and Genetics

9/2/W Evolutionary Basics continued...

Kinship and Kin Selection

Altruism and Cooperation

Reciprocity

The Prisoner's Dilemma

9/4/F Human Adaptation

The Basics of Human Survival

II. Human Evolution and Cognitive Archaeology

9/7/M NO CLASS

9/9/W Hominid Evolution

Ages, Apes, and Hominids

Out of Africa vs Multiregionalism

9/11/F Hominid Evolution continued...

Hands, Brains, and Bi-Pedalism

9/14/M What makes us, us?

When did we become Human?

The notion of Modernity

9/16/W What makes us, us, continued...

A first look at the Neolithic Revolution

III. Evolutionary Psychology Basics: Human Nature

9/18/F Theory of Mind

Theory of Mind and Machiavellian Intelligence

9/21/M The Expression of Emotion

The Expression of Emotion

Be ready to discuss: Handbook – Chapter 26 by Humphrey

9/23/W Personality and Psychopathology

Personality and Pathology from an Evolutionary Perspective

Be ready to discuss: Handbook – Chapter 25 by Hagen & Tushingham

9/25/F Sociality

Social Organization and Cooperation basics

9/28/M Sociality continued...

Behaving Badly...

9/30/W Aggression

Aggression, Warfare, and Homicide

Be ready to discuss: PCA – Chapter 10 by Lopez

10/2/F Sexuality

The Red Queen...

Primate Sexuality and Society

10/5/M Sexuality continued...

Human Mate Selection and Sexuality

The Male Perspective

10/7/W Sexuality continued...

Human Mate Selection and Sexuality Continued...

The Female Perspective

10/9/F NO CLASS

10/12/M Set Your Paper/Presentation Topics and Lecture Times

10/14/W Gender

Gender and Society

An aside on Amazons

10/16/F Development

Lifespan Development from an Evolutionary Perspective

Grandparents and why we live to get old...

Families from an Evolutionary Perspective

IV. The Essential Element: Human Social Organization

10/19/M Social Behavior

Social Groups: Tajfel and Turner

The Evolutionary Psychology of Friendship

10/21/W Social Behavior continued...

Social Organization

Ritual

Be ready to discuss: Handbook – Chapter 18 by Rossano

10/23/F Hunter-Gatherer Social Behavior

About Hunters and Gatherers

10/26/M Beyond Hunter-Gatherer Social Behavior

Dominance

How Leaders Emerge

Be ready to discuss: Handbook – Chapter 23 by Hayden

10/28/W When, Why, and How our Social Behavior Evolved

Göbekli Tepe and Social Organization

Norenzayan and Big Gods

V. The Evolution of Cognition

10/30/F Learning and Cognition

Rationalist Epistemology

Gibson and Beyond: What we are born knowing

Associative Learning

11/2/M The Nature of Human Cognition

Embodied and Extended Cognition

The Evolution of Thinking

11/4/W Language

The Evolution of Language

11/6/F Language continued...

Language and Society...

The work of Merlin Donald, Robin Dunbar, and Colin Renfrew

Be ready to discuss: Handbook – Chapter 15 by Donald

11/9/M Symbolic Representations

Art and Symbolic Representation

Burials

11/11/W Moral Reasoning and The Self

The Evolution of Morality

The Self

VI. Prehistory: Göbekli Tepe as a Case Study

11/13/F The Neolithic Revolution

The Neolithic Revolution according to Childe

Cauvin: The Neolithic Revolution Reconsidered

11/16/M Göbekli Tepe

Göbekli Tepe in some detail

Be ready to discuss: Handbook – Chapter 17 by Dietrich, Notroff, Walter & Dietrich

11/18/W The Origins of Religion

The Evolution of Religion

From Shamen to Ghosts

Back to Göbekli Tepe

Gods

11/20/F Writing as Symbolic Representation

The Evolution of Writing

VII. Later Cognitive Archaeology and Prehistory

11/23/M Human Universals

Human Universals

Why we have them...

What they seem to be...

11/25/W A game of Civilization?

Later Prehistory and Psychology: From Göbekli Tepe to Thales

VIII. Your Turn to Present

11/27/F NO CLASS

11/30/M Wrap Up, Make Up, or Student Lectures as needed

12/2/W Student Lectures

12/4/W Student Lectures

Final Student Lectures