

University of Pennsylvania
Psychology 3444
Evolutionary Perspectives in Social Psychology
Fall 2023
Tu/Th 10:15-11:45
Updated 8/22

Professor: Paul Okami

Room:

Office Hours: By appointment, in person or virtual (Zoom)

Email: pokami@sas.upenn.edu (Please always use email to message me. Never use Canvas!)



Course Description

This discussion-based seminar examines selected topics in social psychology from an evolutionary (Darwinian) perspective. Topics will include evolutionary theory in psychology; the self; prosocial behavior and morality; love, attraction, mating, and parenting; and aggression and violence. Students will be expected to read and discuss selected papers during class and will be asked to present critiques of readings at various points. There will be weekly reading/writing assignments, one test (early in the semester), a class presentation, and a final paper.

There are no formal prerequisites for this class, but this is an upper-level seminar in psychology. You are expected to have had exposure to research methods in psychology, *at least* one or two introductory psychology classes, and be able to read and understand peer-reviewed literature in related fields. You should also be comfortable writing

academic prose and have written a literature review or a similar research paper in APA-style. If you are concerned about your level of experience, we can correspond about it prior to the first class or meet to talk in person or by Zoom at any point. Email: pokami@sas.upenn.edu.

Class Format

Although this class is a discussion-based seminar, the first few class meetings will primarily be lecture-based. Why? Although, as biologist Theodosius Dobzhansky wrote in 1973 “nothing in biology makes sense except in light of evolution,” psychology students are virtually never required to take courses in evolutionary biology, and their psychology courses very rarely include even cursory review of Darwinian theory – the overarching theory of the biological sciences. This is particularly strange because humans are biological beings, and their mental lives and behavior emerge from a biological brain situated in a biological body. Therefore, there is a great deal about our mental life and behavior that “makes very little sense except in light of evolution.”

Because most of you will likely not have had extensive exposure to evolutionary theory, the first two weeks will consist primarily of an introduction to basic Darwinian theory and evolutionary approaches to psychology. As the semester continues, I may also begin new topic areas with an introductory lecture. The rest of class time will be spent in group discussion of the readings assigned each week and other related material. Class readings are divided between mandatory **required readings** and several suggested **supplementary readings**. Although supplementary readings are optional, they really will help to broaden your understanding of the material. *This is particularly important for evolutionary psychology which may seem counter-intuitive at times and will contradict some of what you have been exposed to previously.*

All readings will be posted on Canvas at no charge.

Important Note About Sex and Sexuality-Related Class Content

Human beings are a highly social species, but we are still a *species* – mammals in the primate line. Consequently, we reproduce sexually, and as it happens, there are average sex differences in behavior in all sexually reproducing species, including humans. We will be exploring these differences in some detail when relevant, including discussion of their possible evolutionary and cultural origins. Two topic groups in particular – *love, attraction, mating, and parenting*; and *aggression and violence* – could not possibly be presented without exploring the evolution of human sex differences in mental life and behavior. Some of these discussions will involve details of sexual behavior. *If you are concerned that discussions of average human sex differences in mental life and behavior or of sexual behavior in general might be unduly upsetting, harmful, irritating, or in any way intrinsically displeasing, please reconsider enrolling in this class.*

Course Requirements and Grading

Test on Topic 1 (15% [Raw pts. = 45]). Toward the beginning of the semester there will be a test on the basics of (Darwinian) evolutionary theory applied to psychology, as presented in lecture and readings for Topic 1. These ideas are at the root of the material we will cover during the semester, so it is important that they are fully absorbed. Moreover, Darwinian theories can be counter-intuitive, subtle, and easily misunderstood – or sometimes misrepresented. This increases the importance of having a firm foundation going forward in the class.

The test will be in standard multiple-choice/true-false format, identical to the usual format for in-class, closed-book tests. However, for this test *you may use all your notes, all your readings, and you will have 6 hours at home to complete what ordinarily would be a closed-book, 1 ¼ -hour in-class test. (Serious.)* My point is just to make sure you have all fully absorbed evolutionary theory before we proceed – not to cause more stress for already over-stressed UPenn students.

Posted Summary/Responses to Readings (22% [Raw pts. = 66]). For most classes there will be either one or two required readings posted. Unless otherwise stated in the course schedule, you will prepare for each class by reading the required paper or papers and writing a 3-4-paragraph summary of the basic ideas and/or findings of each article, followed by a 3-4 paragraph *thoughtful* analytic response to **one** of the readings (your choice when two are assigned). You will post your comment papers to Canvas, and if asked, you should be prepared to relay the contents of your analysis in class to initiate a discussion. **You must submit these comments by 4:00 p.m. on the day prior to class** (Mondays and Wednesdays) to give me time to review them.

The summaries/comments will not be graded for specific content as long as they pass a reasonable threshold for effort and engagement with the material. In other words, they are on a pass/fail basis.

NOTE: The articles really must be competently summarized in addition to the thoughtful response. If either of these conditions is not met no credit can be given. The point is – I need to know you really have read the articles in addition to having given some thought to them. (Note that each semester, some papers do receive no-pass grades, so please do your best).

In general, if two articles are being assigned (or one extremely lengthy one) it will be for a Tuesday class – when you will have had the entire weekend to prepare. However, I strongly suggest you do **all** the reading over the five days prior to each Tuesday's class, so you won't be caught rushing your work for that week's Thursday class.

Please use double-spacing, submit in Word format, and include your name in the file title and on each page of the paper itself.

Required Class Presentation (20% [Raw Pts = 60]). At some point during the semester, each of you will be asked to **create a 20-25-minute presentation of one of the supplementary readings for that class.** You should be able to clearly summarize the article's key ideas and/or research findings and moderate further discussion of the paper and the issues it raises. You may use PowerPoints if you wish, but it is not necessary. Criteria for grading will include evidence of careful preparation, thoughtfulness, and level of understanding of the material and skill in communication. In any case, while I will always explain my grading decisions to you, *I will not argue about them.*

Final Paper (26% [Raw Pts. = 78]). The final paper is your opportunity to produce something that is original, thoughtful, and rigorously researched and reasoned. Write a critical literature review of some area related to evolutionary perspectives on topics in social psychology. By "critical" I do not mean that you should necessarily be criticizing others' work! "Critical" in this sense only means carefully thought through, balanced, and as free of personal bias as possible.

The review should describe research in a *specific* area. Please *do not* choose large areas, large questions, or large anything. Good science tends to be small, and if you choose a title like "Evolutionary Theories of Prosocial Behavior" or "Aggression in Childhood and Adolescence" (both actual [misguided] titles of student papers) you would need about 400 references just to begin writing the paper.

For example, if you were interested either of the latter topics you should choose a very specific area to address, say, "Evidence for Reciprocal Altruism in Social Media Postings" (the topic of evolutionary theories of prosocial behavior) or "Sex Differences in Indirect Verbal Aggression and Shaming among Elementary School-Age Children" (aggression in childhood). The point is to choose a topic that is doable and manageable – where research exists but not so much research that you will never be able to claw your way out of the avalanche.

The paper should be about 10 pages not counting title page, and reference sections, and abstracts (if you include one)¹. For this assignment I will be insistent about conforming to 7th edition APA- style in writing (e.g., tenses, voice, etc.) and formatting (e.g., 1" margins, running head or no running head, and so forth) as well as citation and referencing. As always, I will explain my grading decision to you, but... **Please use the 7th Ed. APA manual only.** Do not rely on the internet because it is often wrong about APA style (and everything else important). The manual describes and *depicts* an

¹ Abstracts are not necessary for APA student papers but I like them and if you feel like putting one in, feel free to do so – it won't affect your grade though :-)

example of exactly the way a student paper should be formatted, *and yours should look exactly like that!* (See pp. 61-67 of the manual).

I am available to go over rough drafts and offer feedback for this paper. Although it is not required and won't count toward participation points, I *strongly* recommend that you take advantage of the offer.

Final Brief Oral Presentation of Your Paper (5% [Raw Pts. = 15]). You will do a timed 6-7 minute presentation of your final paper during the last week of class. You may use whatever materials you choose and whatever mode of presentation you like (but no interpretive dance, please).

Participation/Attendance (12% [Raw Pts. = 36]). This course is run as a discussion seminar, and its success depends upon your participation, and obviously, you need to be present to participate. You should arrive prepared to discuss the assigned required readings and, if asked, to read or explain your posted comments to the class. However, I realize that some people are more comfortable speaking in class than others. Therefore, if you are the kind of person who would rather spend a season in hell than be called on in class to talk, you do not need to force yourself to talk a great deal, but you do need to demonstrate that you are engaged with the course material. *So you will be graded on quality of participation, not quantity of verbal output.* 😊 And, as before, I will explain my grading decisions but *not argue about them*.

As stated, the discussion-based nature of this course means that everyone's presence is important for its success. Accordingly, *unexcused* absences will be reflected in your participation grade. However, *two* absences per student will be excused automatically and a third absence *may* be excused in the case of genuinely severe illness, hospitalization, funeral (yours or someone else's), existential crisis, or just a vague sense of nausea at the pointlessness of it all (*documentation required*). However, your required reading comments will still need to be posted on time for classes for which you are absent, barring genuine inability to do the work due to illness.

Each additional *unexcused* absence will result in a 2- point reduction in participation points. Out of fairness to those who do arrive on time, repeated unexcused lateness will also be reflected in your participation grade.

Policies on Deadlines and Late Assignments. I understand that exceptional circumstances may sometimes arise that would make it difficult or impossible to hand your weekly summary/comment papers in on time. **Each of you is allowed two late submissions over the course of the semester, as long as they are in my mailbox within 12 hours (that's 4:00 a.m..)**

There are no extensions given for the final paper. No papers will be accepted beyond the due date.

Important Note About Academic Freedom for Instructors and Students

Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom, and academic freedom is essential for learning to take place. I take these ideas extremely seriously. They imply that *all opinions and ideas, no matter how unusual, controversial, or offensive they may be perceived by some, must be respected in the tolerant spirit of academic discourse if they are related to the content and topics covered in the class and are presented respectfully, honestly, and with charity towards those with whom one might disagree.* Please follow these guidelines, and as obvious as this might seem, let your behavior mirror how you would like to be treated by others. **In any case, participation in this class affirms that you have read the syllabus and you accept, and agree to abide by, its policies.**

Academic Integrity and Scholarship. The assignments you submit must be your own, original work, completed for *this* course. *Always* cite the source of a finding, idea, or argument put forth by someone else, and *always* put the findings, ideas, and arguments you cite into your own words in a way that reflects your own thoughts. If a direct quote is necessary, use quotation marks according to APA-style. Plagiarized material or apparently intentional failure to cite sources will be subject to severe penalties within the course and possible disciplinary action beyond the course. Please be very careful, because sometimes people do not even realize they are violating these rules. *When in doubt, cite.*

You may not use any AI generated text without citation, and, as obvious as it may seem, AI is not a legitimate academic source. Thus, without citation it constitutes plagiarism and academic dishonesty, and with citation it is worthless and constitutes academic incompetence.

COURSE SCHEDULE

This schedule should be considered a hopeful approximation. I may (probably will) make changes in readings or assignment dates as the semester progresses.

TOPIC 1: Introduction to Evolutionary Theory in Psychology

IMPORTANT: You do not need to write responses to readings for the first three classes. However, the test for Topic 1 will cover the lecture material and all three readings.

Class 1 (Tu 8/29):

Required readings: NONE

Supplementary readings: NONE

Class 2 (Th 8/31):

Required readings:

Confer et al., (2010). Evolutionary psychology: Controversies, questions, prospects, and limitations.

Perry & Mace (2010). The lack of acceptance of evolutionary approaches to human behaviour. READ ONLY TO p. 114

Supplementary readings: NONE

Class 3 (Tu (9/5):

Required readings:

Okami (2022). Introduction to Evolutionary Theory in Social Psychology

Supplementary readings:

Lewis, et al. (2017). Evolutionary psychology: A how-to guide.

Schmitt & Pilcher (2004). Evaluating evidence of adaptation: How do we know one when we see one?

Buss & von Hippel (2018). Psychological barriers to evolutionary psychology: Ideological bias and coalitional adaptations.

Kenrick & Gomez-Jacento (2013). Economics, sex and the emergence of society.

Li et al. (2018). The mismatch hypothesis.

Tooby & Cosmides (1992): The psychological foundations of culture.

Shtulman, A., & Schulz, L. (2008). The relation between essentialist beliefs and evolutionary reasoning.

THERE WILL BE NO CLASS MEETING ON THURSDAY 9/7.

Instead, the test for Topic #1 will be posted on Canvas at 10:00 a.m. on Thursday 9/7 and will be due by 4:00 p.m. NO LATE TESTS WILL BE ACCEPTED.

TOPIC 2: The Self, Self-Esteem, Self-Deception, and Free-Will

Class 4: (Tu 9/12):

Required readings:

Baumeister, R., (2019). The Self.

Klein, S. B. (2010). The self: As a construct in psychology and neuropsychological evidence for its multiplicity.

Supplementary Readings:

Yost, J. H., Strube, M. J., & Bailey, J. R. (1992). The construction of the self: An evolutionary view.

Skowronski & Sedekis (2017). On the evolution of the human self: A data-driven review and reconsideration.

Sedikides, C., & Skowronski, J. J. (2000). On the evolutionary functions of the symbolic self: The emergence of self-evaluation motives.

Class 5 (Th 9/14):

Required readings:

Pyszczynski et al. (2004). Why do people need self-esteem? A theoretical and empirical review.

Supplementary readings:

Leary & Baumeister (2000). The nature and function of self-esteem: Sociometer theory.

Denissen et al., 2008. Self-esteem reactions to social interactions: evidence for sociometer mechanisms across days, people, and nations.

Anthony, D. B., Wood, J. V., & Holmes, J. G. . (2007). Testing sociometer theory: Self-esteem and the importance of acceptance for social decision-making.

Baumeister et al., (2000). Self-esteem, narcissism, and aggression: Does violence result from low self-esteem or from threatened egoism?

Landau et al. (2004). On the compatibility of terror management theory and perspectives on human evolution.

Harmon-Jones et al. (1997). Terror management theory and self-esteem: Evidence that increased self-esteem reduces mortality salience effects.

Leary, M. (2004). The function of self-esteem in terror management theory and sociometer theory: Comment on Pyszczynski et al. (2004).

Class 6 (Tu 9/19):

Required readings:

Von Hippel & Trivers (2011). The evolution and psychology of self-deception [reading the commentaries which follow the article is optional but could help if you use it for a presentation).

Supplementary readings:

Schwardmann, P., & van der Weele, J. (2019). Deception and self-deception.

Commentaries on von Hippel & Trivers (2011) [following the reference section of the target article]

Butterworth, J., Trivers, R., von Hippel, W. (2022). The better to fool you with.: Deception and self-deception. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 47, 101385.

Class 7 (Th 9/21):

Required Readings:

Struhl, K. J. (2020). What kind of illusion is the illusion of self?*

Harris, S. (2012). Interview with Bruce Hood

Supplementary readings:

NONE

Class 8 (Tu 9/26):

Sam Harris Audio files (mp3) Free Will, Parts 1, 2, and 3.

Baumeister, R. (2008). Free will in scientific psychology.

Supplementary readings:

Nahmias et al. (2014). It's OK if 'my brain made me do it': People's intuitions about free will and neuroscientific prediction

Roskies (2006). Neuroscientific challenges to free will and responsibility.

Topic 3: Prosocial Behavior and Morality

Class 9 (Th 9/28):

Required readings:

Simpson, J. A., & Beckes, L. (2010). Evolutionary perspectives of prosocial behavior.

Supplementary readings:

Trivers, R. (1971). The evolution of reciprocal altruism

Silk, J. (2011). Evolutionary foundations of human prosocial sentiments

Hawley, P. (2014). Evolution, prosocial behavior, and altruism

Class 10 (Tu 10/3):

Required readings:

Trivers, R. (2006). Reciprocal altruism 30 years later.

Supplementary readings:

Hames, R. (2015). Kin selection in humans.

Krebs, D. L. (2008). How selfish by nature?

Trivers, R (1971) Reciprocal Altruism

Class 11 (Th 10/5):

Required readings:

Bloom, P. (2013). The baby in the well: The case against empathy.

Bloom, P. (2017). Empathy and its discontents

Supplementary readings:

Stevens, F., & Taber, K. (2021). The neuroscience of empathy and compassion in prosocial behavior.

NOTE! There will be NO CLASS MEETING on Tuesday 10/10 (Class 12). However, your response papers will still be due.

Class 12 (Tu 10/10):

Required readings:

Pinker, S. (2008). The moral instinct.

Krebs, D. L. (2008). Morality: An evolutionary account

Supplementary readings:

Awad, E., Dsouza, S., Shariff, A., Rahwan, I., & Bonnefon, J-F. (2020). Universals and variations in moral decisions made in 42 countries by 70,000 participants.

FALL BREAK, No Class on Th 10/12

Class 13 (Tu 10/17):

Required readings:

Bloom, P. (2010). The moral life of babies (New York Times)

Supplementary readings:

Hamlin, J. K., Wynn, K., & Bloom, P. (2007). Social evaluation by preverbal infants.

Bloom, P. (2013). The moral life of babies (Chapter 1 of *Just babies: the origins of good and evil*).

Hamlin, J. K., Wynn, K., Bloom, P., & Mahajan, N. (2011). How infants and toddlers react to antisocial others.

Class 14 (Th 10/19):

Required readings:

Graham, J., Haidt, J., Motyl, M., Meindl, P., Iskiwitsch, C., & Moorjman, M. (2018). Moral Foundations Theory: On the advantages of moral pluralism over moral monism.

Schein, C. & Gray, K. (2015). The unifying moral dyad: Liberals and conservatives share the same harm-based moral template

Supplementary readings

Dogruyol, B., Alper, S., & Yilmaz, O. (2019). The five-factor model of the moral foundations theory is stable across WEIRD and non-WEIRD cultures.

Clifford, S., Iyengar, V., Cabeza, R., & Sinnott-Armstrong, W. (2019). Moral foundations vignettes: A standardized stimulus database of scenarios based on moral foundations theory.

Graham, J., Haidt, J. & Nosek, B. A. (2009). Liberals and conservatives rely on different sets of moral foundations.

Class 15 (Tu 10/24):

Required readings:

- Harris, S. (2010). Toward a science of morality.
Shackelford, T. (2011). Walking the moral landscape

Supplementary readings:

- Harris, S. (2009). *The moral landscape* (dissertation)
Gert. B. (2012). Neuroscience and morality

Topic 4: Love, Attraction, Mating, and Parenting

Love

Class 16 (Th 10/26):

Required readings:

- Buss, D. (2018). The evolution of love in humans

Supplementary readings:

- De Munck, V. Korotayev, A., & McGreevey, J. (2016). Romantic love and family organization: A case for romantic love as a biosocial universal.
Bode, A., & Kushnick, G. (2021). Proximate and ultimate perspectives on romantic love.
Buss, D. (2018). Sexual and emotional infidelity: Evolved gender differences in jealousy prove robust and replicable.
Fusell, N. (2012). Between-sex differences in romantic jealousy: Substance or spin? A qualitative analysis.

Class 17 (Tu 10/31):

Required readings:

- Diamond, L. (2003). What does sexual orientation orient? A biobehavioral model distinguishing romantic love and sexual desire.

Supplementary readings:

- Fisher, H. (1994). The nature of romantic love.
Diamond, L. (2004). Emerging perspectives on distinctions between romantic love and sexual desire.
Gibson, L. S. (2015). The science of romantic love: Distinct evolutionary, neural, and hormonal characteristics.

Attraction and Mating

Class 18 (Th 11/2)

Required readings:

- Diamond, L. (2008). Female bisexuality from adolescence to adulthood: Results from a 10-year longitudinal study.

Supplementary readings:

NONE

Class 19 (Tu 11/7):

Required readings:

Okami, P. (2022). Attraction and Mating (adapted and revised for Psyc 3444) pp. 1-36 ONLY

Gildersleeve, K., Haselton, M. G., & Fales, M. (2014). Do women's mate preferences change across the ovulatory cycle? A meta-analytic review

Supplementary readings:

Walter, K. V., Conroy-Beam, D., Buss, D. Asao, K., Sorokowska A., Sorokowski, P., et al. (2020). Sex differences in mate preferences across 45 countries: A large-scale replication.

Lieberman, D., Pillsworth, & Haselton, M. G. (2011). Kin affiliation across the ovulatory cycle: Females avoid fathers when fertile.

Miller, G., Tybur, J. M., & Jordan, B. D. (2007). Ovulatory cycle effects on tip earnings by lap dancers: economic evidence for human estrus?

Durante, K. M., Li, N. P., & Haselton, M. G. (2008). Changes in women's choice of dress across the ovulatory cycle: Naturalistic and laboratory task-based evidence.

Class 20 (Th 11/9):

Required readings:

Okami, P. (2022). Attraction and Mating (adapted and revised for Psyc 3444) pp. 36 to the END of the chapter.

Okami & Shackelford (2001). Human sex differences in sexual psychology and behavior pp. 195-207 ONLY

Supplementary readings:

Trivers, R. (1972). Parental investment and sexual selection.

Kenrick, D. T., Keefe, R. C., Gabrielidis, C., & Cornelius, J. S. (1996). Adolescents' age preferences for dating partners: Support for an evolutionary model of life-history strategies.

Li, N. P., & Kenrick D. T. (2006). Sex similarities and differences in preferences for short-term mates.

Class 21 (Tu 11/14):

Required readings:

Schmitt, D., Shackelford, T. K., & Buss, D. (2001). Are men really more 'oriented' toward short-term mating than women? A critical review of theory and research.

Buss, D. M. & Schmitt, D. P. (2019). Mate preferences and their behavioral manifestations. READ pp. 79-98 ONLY.

Supplementary readings:

Schmitt, D. (2003). Universal sex differences in the desire for sexual variety: Tests from 52 nations, 6 continents, and 13 islands.

Gueguen, N. (2011). Effects of solicitor sex and attractiveness on receptivity to sexual offers: A field study.

Class 22(Th 11/16):

Required readings:

Gildersleeve, K., Haselton, M. G., & Fales, M. (2014). Do women's mate preferences change across the ovulatory cycle? A meta-analytic review.

Supplementary readings:

Lieberman, D., Pillsworth, & Haselton, M. G. (2011). Kin affiliation across the ovulatory cycle: Females avoid fathers when fertile.

Miller, G., Tybur, J. M., & Jordan, B. D. (2007). Ovulatory cycle effects on tip earnings by lap dancers: economic evidence for human estrus?

Durante, K. M., Li, N. P., & Haselton, M. G. (2008). Changes in women's choice of dress across the ovulatory cycle: Naturalistic and laboratory task-based evidence.

Parenting

Class 23 (Tu 11/21):

Required readings:

Salmon, C. A., & Malcolm, J. (2011). Parent-offspring conflict

Harris, J. R. (1995). Where is the child's environment? A group socialization theory of development.

Supplementary readings:

Trivers, R. (1972). Parent-offspring conflict.

Geary, D. (2021). The evolution of fatherhood (Evolution of paternal investment)

Harris, J. R. (2000). Context-specific learning, personality, and birth order.

Schlomer, G. L., Del Giudice, M., & Ellis, B. J. (2011). Parent-offspring conflict theory: An evolutionary framework for understanding conflict within human families.

NO CLASS 11/23

Topic 5: Aggression and Violence

Class 24 (Tu 11/28):

Required readings:

Archer, J. (2009). Does sexual selection explain human sex differences in aggression.

Supplementary readings:

Archer, J. (2006). Testosterone and human aggression: An evaluation of the challenge hypothesis.

Archer, J. (2004). Sex differences in aggression in real-world settings: a meta-analytic review.

Class 25 (Th 11/30):

Required readings:

Daly, M., & Wilson, M. (2001). Risk-taking, intrasexual competition and homicide.

Buss, D. M. (2011). The evolution of intimate partner violence.

Supplementary readings:

Daly, M., & Wilson, M. (1997). Crime and conflict: Homicide in evolutionary psychological perspective.

Nowak, A., Gelfand, M.J., Borkowski, W., Cohen, D., & Hernandez, I. (2016). The evolutionary basis of honor cultures

Class 26 (Tu 12/5):

Presentations

Class 27 (Th 12/7):

Presentations