

Behavior and The Environment (v1)

Department of Human Ecology, School of Environmental and Biological Sciences,

He who understands a baboon would do more towards metaphysics than Locke (Darwin 1838).

Course Information

Number Section: 11:374:322:01

Meeting Time: TBA

Location: RAB 207

Website: Canvas.

Instructor

Victoria C. Ramenzoni

Cook Office Building, Office 211.

Victoria.Ramenzoni@rutgers.edu

Office Hours: TBA or by appointment



N.B.: The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations may be necessary. All modifications will be announced in class and posted on Canvas. It is your responsibility to be aware of these announced changes.



Course Description: Behavior and the Environment

This course is designed to help you understand the role played by the environment, genes, and culture in shaping human behavior. We will explore some of the most important theories from Anthropology, Biology, and Psychology that study how individuals behave, adapt to their environment, and interact among each other. At the beginning of the class we will focus on identifying the different levels of explanation, the role of genetic approaches, and the contribution of evolutionary and cultural theories. We will then investigate how adaptation to environmental stressors (i.e.: temperature, altitude) can help us understand current patterns of human variation. The course will end with a consideration of environmental and ecological psychology and its relation to risk behavior.

Objectives: What's in for me?

If all goes well, at the end of this course you would have gained a new theoretical and analytical toolbox that will help you understand, explore, and critically evaluate the determinants of human behavior. Hopefully, you may be able to transpose some of these insights and skills into your own work. **This is an elective course and I expect that students will take a high degree of responsibility for their learning. This includes regular class attendance, active participation in classroom discussions, careful attention to reading material, timely completion of course activities, and professional interactions with other class members.**

Major Objectives:

Goal 1.3: Explain characteristics of human populations, Goal 1.6: Evaluate major issues including race...; and Goal 1.7: Explain how social forces, cultural values, and behavior affect human-environmental relations. Goals 2.2, 2.3, and 2.4 Goals 3.1 and 3.2. <https://humanecology.rutgers.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Learning-Goals-EPiB.pdf>

Thematic

- Review and evaluate major theoretical frameworks for understanding the relationships among human behavior, culture, and the environment.
- Critically consider the evidence related to human cultural and behavioral variation across different ecologies and spatial and temporal scales.
- Explore and discuss theoretical tools and methodological techniques developed to study human adaptability and responses to environmental/societal threats.

Instructional

- To expose students to the basic arguments and literature of anthropology, biology, and psychology of human behavior so as to encourage students to think about behavior in a more informed, critical, and unbiased way.
- To train students to be more effective readers, by reading actual academic literature including primary sources.

- To train students to be more effective researchers and communicators. Students will use on-line and library sources to research a topic of their choosing and develop a poster and an annotated bibliography to support their work.

Assignments

Your grade will reflect your performance on two exams, a final poster, and class attendance and participation.

- 1) **Exams:** Two exams each worth 25% of course grade.

Exam 1: Oct 16

Exam 2: Nov 29

- 2) **Poster Project:** Worth 45% of course grade. You will be responsible for developing a research poster on a topic of your choosing and a short essay to accompany it where you reflect on what you learned while taking the class and doing your short project (1000 MINIMUM to 1200 words MAXIMUM). Through the poster project you will have (1) the opportunity to explore an issue that you care about in greater depth (must be related to the content of the course), and (2) explore ways of communicating your findings in a concise fashion. The project is something you should be working on throughout the quarter. Assignments will have different due dates. More specifics will be provided in a separate handout. Late assignments will be docked 2 points for each day.

First: You will be required to submit a short paragraph describing the research problem you will address and its relevance (250 words, 5% of grade).

Then: an annotated bibliography (no less than 5 peer-reviewed additional sources, NO WEBSITES, 10% of grade) will be requested.

Finally: you will have the option to submit a first draft of your poster for revisions. The final version of the poster (20% of grade) and short essay (10% of grade) will be due at the end of the course.

On writing conventions and citation style:

All written materials for this class will be typed and consistently formatted (font of your choosing, size 12, 1 inch margins, single spaced). For issues of style beyond general document formatting refer to the current APA/MLA norms. Use American word spellings. **If you need any help on managing citations and software, please do not hesitate to reach out. I advise the use of Zotero or any other reference manager for your project.**

Grades

To get an A, you are required to have at least 94 points. To get a B, you should score somewhere between 85 and 83, and a C anywhere between 73 and 75. A D is any score between 63 and 65. You will fail if you score below 60.

A+, A	94–100%, 94–100%, 90–93%
B+, B	86–89%, 83–85%, 80–82%
C+, C	76–79%, 73–75%, 70–72%
D+, D	66–69%, 63–65%, 60–62%

Item	Due Date	Points
Participation	By choice	5 points
One Paragraph Research Statement	10/01	5 points
Exams	10/25 and 12/4	50 points
Poster Bibliography (Annotated)	11/20	10 points
Poster and short essay	12/11	30 points (20-10)
		100 points

Expectations and Requirements:

- Punctual attendance on synchronous sessions. NO CELLPHONES!!!!
- Active participation in class.
- On-time submissions (you will lose points for not submitting on time...)
- DO THE READINGS and Do your own work!

- Compliance with Rutgers policies for ethical conduct. Each student is responsible to inform themselves about those standards before performing any academic work.

Participation: The instructor recognizes that talking in public may be easier for some while difficult for others. All of this said, you are strongly encouraged to take part in discussions, state your informed opinion (based on arguments from the class materials and evidence-based articles or case studies), and challenge any assumptions that you may find compelling or wrong.

Late Assignments/Make-ups: Can I take an exam late or submit an assignment late? Not unless you have a really good reason—trouble with the law, unforeseen illness or death, savage attack by raccoons, etc. Whether a make-up assignment will be permitted, and its format, are at the discretion of the instructor. If at all possible, please contact the instructor before the due date, or alternatively, within the following 24 hours.

Attendance: Class attendance is very important, both for individual benefits and for the collective social benefits that come from class discussion. As an added incentive to participate, you will lose (0.05 %) class points for each class you miss. Doctors' notes, obituaries, and attendance to academic conferences are the only justifiable excuses for missing class. If weather, vehicle maintenance issues, heartache, sickness, etc. cause you to miss class, the instructor will be sympathetic, but you will lose attendance points.

Learning disabilities: Students with disabilities who require reasonable accommodations in order to participate in course activities or meet course requirements should contact the instructor or designate during regular office hours or by appointment. Rutgers has many resources that we can rely upon, but this requires some planning. So meeting with the instructor is the best way we can make the most out of available resources.

"Netiquette" Policies

- Identify yourself **in all email or Canvas message correspondence. Begin messages with a greeting and close with your name.**
- Avoid sarcasm. **It can be misinterpreted and cause hurt feelings.**
- Keep the dialog collegial and professional. **Some discussion topics may be controversial.**
- Do not flame - **These are outbursts of extreme emotion or opinion. Think twice before you submit a response. You cannot edit or delete your posts once they have been submitted.**
- Do not use offensive language or profanity.
- Use clear subject lines for your posts.
- Do not use all caps. **It is the online equivalent of YELLING!**
- Avoid using abbreviations or acronyms - **like UNESCO - unless the entire class knows them.**
- Use emoticons **to clarify your emotions. They add context to your words that cannot be seen otherwise. :)**
- Be forgiving. **Anyone can make a mistake.**

Resources for remediation

Students can find academic support at the Rutgers Learning Centers.

<https://rlc.rutgers.edu>

Accommodations for special needs

Learning disabilities: Students with disabilities who require reasonable accommodations in order to participate in course activities or meet course requirements should contact the instructor or designate during regular office hours or by appointment. Rutgers has many resources that we can rely upon, but this requires some planning. So meeting with the instructor is the best way we can make the most out of available resources.

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations must follow the procedures outlined at the Office of Disability Services.

<https://ods.rutgers.edu>

About inclusion and diversity:

This class is a safe space. Please talk to the instructor if anything happens that threatens that. This includes: microaggressions, open aggressions, things that bothered you... etc. And remember to **SPEAK UP!**

<https://diversity.rutgers.edu/speakup>

<https://studentaffairs.rutgers.edu/resources/bias-prevention-reporting#tab=panel-2>

<https://diversity.rutgers.edu>

We acknowledge that the land on which we stand is the ancestral territory of the Lenape People. We pay respect to Indigenous people throughout the Lenape diaspora—past, present, and future—and honor those that have been historically and systemically disenfranchised.

Course Readings

There are no textbooks for this class. However, we will read several excerpts from this book (can be purchased online on your vendor of preference. Get the ebook version and save a tree in the process). The book is very economical so you may want to get it.

Laland, K. N. and G. R. Brown. (2011). *Sense and Nonsense: Evolutionary perspectives on human behaviour* (2 edition). New York: Oxford University Press, USA.

Readings and Topics by Class

Week	PART 1: Evolution and Behavior	Assigned Readings
1	Wed Sept 6	Syllabus.
2	Mon Sept 11 Introduction: Definitions Part 1a. Fundamentals of Human Ecology.	Sutton Chapter 1. Selected Pages.
	Wed September 13 Introduction: Definitions Part 1b. Fundamentals of Human Ecology.	Sutton Chapter 1. Selected Pages. How to do a problem statement.
3	MON September 18 Introduction: Definitions 2. Fundamentals of Ecology.	Sutton Chapter 2. Selected Pages.
	Wed Sept 20 BASICS of evolutionary theory	YOM KIPPUR let me know if you are planning on not attending. Boyd and Silk Chapter 1.
4	MON September 25 BASICS of evolutionary theory 2	Laland and Brown Chapter 1.
	Wed September 27 No Class	
5	Mon October 2 Approaches to the study of behavior. Levels of explanation.	Laland and Brown Chapter 1.
	Wed Oct 4 Tinbergen's 4 Levels	Exercise in class
6	MON, October 9 Classifying humans: BEFORE Darwin	Bones, Bodies, Behavior. Introduction. COME PREPARED with the text to work in class.
	Wed October 11 Classifying humans: Evolutionary approaches to the study of behavior.	Laland and Brown Chapter 2. Excerpts. Galton 1904.
7	MON, October 16 Nature-Nurture.	Documentary TBD. You can choose between two. Discussion 1: Documentary Discussion. Come prepared. Excerpts from Laland and Brown.
	Wed October 18 Nature-Nurture.	Plomin & Asbury.

	EXAM prep session.	
8	MON, October 23 Sociobiology and genetic determinism. IS IT IN OUR GENES?	Laland and Brown Chapter 3. Wilson 1975, selected pages.
	Wed October 25 Sociobiology and genetic determinism II. Altruistic behavior.	Laland and Brown Chapter 3. Trivers 1971. EXAM 1 DUE
9	MON, October 30 Sociobiology III. Criticism.	Laland and Brown Chapter 3.
	Wed Nov 1 Human Behavioral Ecology I	Smith and Winterhalder 2000.
10	MON, November 6 Human Behavioral Ecology II: Optimal Foraging Theory.	O'Connell and Hawkes 1984

	Part 2: Culture and Biology	
10	Wed November 8 Evolutionary Psychology.	Laland Chapter 5, Excerpts (read only until key concepts and then jump to criticism). Cosmides and Tooby 1996.
11	MON, November 13 Evolutionary Psychology 2.	New et al. 2007.
	Wed November 15 Race I	Graves.
12	MON, November 20 Race II and racism in science	Molnar. Watch: Doc on wealth inequality. Annotated Bibliography Due.
	Wed Nov 22 NO CLASS – Friday switch NO CLASS change in schedule	NO CLASS change in schedule
13	Mon, November 27 Cultural Evolution	Laland and Brown Chapter 6. Excerpts. Henrich McElreath 2003.
	Wed November 29 Dual Inheritance Theory Comparisons and Critiques of approaches.	Laland and Brown Chapter 7 and 8. Excerpts.

	Part 3: Acting upon the world: Biology of Poverty and Comparisons	
14	Mon December 4 Biology of poverty. The New Biocultural Synthesis. CLOSING ARGUMENTS.	Non A 2016. Hush Ashmore 2000, selected pages. Second Exam Due.
	Wed December 6: Work in Class	Poster Session Presentations I.
15	MON, December 11: Work in Class FINAL Poster and Short essay DUE.	Poster Session Presentations II.
16	Wed December 13 FINAL DAY OF CLASSSSSSS. NO class.	
	Friday, December 15 HARD DEADLINE FOR POSTERS AND ESSAYS.	

Some Mandatory Articles

1. Galton, F. (1904). Eugenics: Its definition and scope. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 10, 1-25.
2. O'Connell, J.F. & Hawkes, K. (1984). Food choice and foraging sites among the Alyawara. *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 40(4), 504–535.
3. Wilson, E. O. (1975). Man: From sociobiology to sociology. Chapter 26 in *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis* (pp. 547-575). Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press.
4. Trivers, R.L., (1971). Evolution of reciprocal altruism. *Quarterly Review of Biology*, 46 (1), 35–57.
5. New, J., Krasnow, M. M., Truxaw, D., & Gaulin. S. J. C. (2007). Spatial adaptations for plant foraging: Women excel and calories count. *Proceedings of the Royal Society B.*, 274, 2679-2684
6. Henrich, J., & McElreath, R. (2003). The evolution of cultural evolution. *Evolutionary Anthropology*, 12, 123-135.
7. Plomin, R., & Asbury, K. (2005). Nature and Nurture: Genetic and Environmental Influences on Behavior. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 600(1), 86–98. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716205277184>

8. Winterhalder, B., & Smith, E. A. (2000). Analyzing adaptive strategies: Human behavioral ecology at twenty-five. *Evolutionary Anthropology: Issues, News, and Reviews*, 9(2), 51–72.
9. Little, M. A., & Garruto, R. M. (2000). Human adaptability research into the beginning of the third millennium. *Human Biology*, 72(1), 179–199.
10. Harris, M., Bose, N. K., Klass, M., Mencher, J. P., Oberg, K., Opler, M. K., ... Vayda, A. P. (1966). The Cultural Ecology of India's Sacred Cattle [and Comments and Replies]. *Current Anthropology*, 7(1), 51–66.
11. Non A, Román JC, Gross CL, Gilman SE, Loucks EB, Buka, SL Kubzansky LD. 2016. Early childhood social disadvantage is associated with poor health behaviors in adulthood. *Ann Hum Biol* 43:144–153.
12. Hush-Ashmore R. 2000. Theory in Human Biology: Evolution, Ecology, Adaptability, and Variation. In *Human Biology: An Evolutionary and Biocultural Perspective*. Eds. Stinson S, Bogin B, Huss-Ashmore R, O'Rourke D. Wiley-Liss, Inc. New York, NY. Pp. 1-26.
13. Frisancho, R. A. 1993. *Human Adaptation and Accommodation*. University of Michigan Press.
14. Cosmides & Tooby, 1996. A Primer. <https://www.cep.ucsb.edu/primer.html>
15. Leonard, W. 1989. Nutritional Determinants of High-Altitude Growth in NuFioa, Peru. *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 80:341-352
16. Stocking, G. 1988. *Bones, Bodies, and Behavior*. The University of Wisconsin Press.
17. Proctor, R. 1988. From Anthropology to Rasselkunde, in *Bones, Bodies, and Behavior*. The University of Wisconsin Press.
18. Graves, J. Biological V. Social Definitions of Race: Implications for Modern Biomedical Research. *Rev Black Polit Econ*. DOI 10.1007/s12114-009-9053-3
19. Molnar, S. 2006. *Human Variation. Races, Types, and Ethnic Groups*. New York, Routledge.
20. Sutton, M. and E. Anderson. 2006. *Introduction to Cultural Ecology*. CH 1 and 2. AltaMira Press.