Course outline and instructions

Date: December 6 2018 – January 15 2019 with lectures and seminars.
Location: Department of Psychology, Stockholm University.
Organizer: Professor Torun Lindholm (torun.lindholm@psychology.su.se)

Instructors:
Professor Kimmo Eriksson (kimmel@gmail.com)
Professor Torun Lindholm
PhD cand. Henrik Nordström
PhD Anders Sand
Associate professor Julia Uddén

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Course Description
This is a master and postgraduate course in evolutionary psychology with a focus on social behavior. Each week, students will read and discuss empirical and review articles germane to understanding basic human social behavior from an evolutionary psychology viewpoint. Both human and animal literatures will be surveyed, and relevant areas covered will include: Central issues and controversies, Prosocial behavior and cooperation, Parenting and kinship, Social influence and group dynamics, Aggression, Intergroup prejudice and conflicts, and The evolution of language.

Expected study results
After completing the course:
- Students should be able to describe, analyze and critically reflect on theoretical and empirical issues in evolutionary psychology with a focus on some of the central social behavior research areas.

Readings. Articles and other information for this course will be made available on the course site on Athena. The textbook below will be used, and this is bought by the student.

Educational activities
The course consists of lectures and seminars. It is normally given in English but can be given in Swedish if only Swedish speaking students participate.

Course requirements and examination
To reach the course goals, students need to attend and participate in all seminars. Student tasks related to the seminars are described below.
1. **Contribution to class.** Contribution to class will be worth 70% of your final grade. This part of your grade will be based on the instructor’s assessment of the extent and quality of your participation in class discussions. As part of this, students will generate 3-5 discussion questions prior to each class. Students should specify the reading(s) that inspired the question, and give a motivation for why the chosen issue merits discussion. The purpose of these questions is to ensure that you’ve actually read the papers that have been assigned (it’s hard to discuss something you haven’t read!), and to help raise issues for discussion. Your discussion questions are due by noon the day before the class, and should be turned in whether or not you will be able to attend the class session to which they apply. Submit the questions through Athena by the dates and times specified in the schedule. Please use the text window for this (do not upload a file). Make sure your own name and the full reference to current article is stated clearly. There are a total of seven seminars.

2. **Leading the discussion.** Students will each take responsibility for leading the discussion with partners in their respective group (2-3 students) for 1-2 class periods (number depending on enrollment) during the course period, altogether worth 30% of your final grade. Leading the discussion will entail the following: 1) Summarizing key points to be gleaned from the articles we’ve read for that class period, 2) Discuss the questions from the members of the group (note that everyone is responsible for keeping the conversation going but having someone throw new balls in the air once the old ones have fallen to the ground is very helpful, and this is the Discussion Leader’s job.) The discussion leaders do not need to submit their discussion questions on Athena for that class period.

**Complement missed seminars**

Students who have missed one or more compulsory seminars of the course “Social Behavior: Perspectives from Evolutionary Psychology” must submit (1) questions + (2) written supplementary information as a substitute for the seminars you missed.

1) All students must submit a minimum of three written questions before each seminar. You must submit discussion questions to ALL seminars, even the ones you missed. These issues will, as previously announced assume from the literature for each seminar. All articles are available in Athena.

2) The assignment consists of choosing (at least) two of the articles to be discussed at the seminar you missed and discuss their content (about 2 pages per article = 4 pages total/ seminar). The idea is not that you should write only a review of the articles, but try to debate and discuss the content. Eg: What is most interesting in the articles? What implications the results can have on emotion research (theoretical, methodological, or applied)? What is innovative? What is problematic? For example, you can start out from your discussion questions and “deepen” them.

Submit your seminar questions and additional information to the responsible seminar teacher before the end of the course (or as soon after as you can).
6/12-2018 Lecture 1a: Evolutionary perspectives on human social behavior: Central issues and controversies

Lecturer: Torun Lindholm
The main idea of this lecture is to provide a historic background to issues and controversies in evolutionary perspectives on human social behavior.

It is important that you read the literature before this lecture.

Literature
   Chapters 1-3 and 5

6/12-2018 Lecture 1b: Evolution – Basic concepts

Lecturer: Anders Sand
This lecture and the literature below will introduce you to the main concepts and terminology of evolution. The goal is that these concepts and terminology will be helpful (and even improve) upcoming discussion seminars on evolutionary psychology topics.

Literature
1. Berkeley's online introduction to Evolution
   An educational introduction to the basic concepts of evolution can be found here. Most important are the topics under Mechanisms. When reading this material, keep the following questions in mind and test that you have learned the material by answering them:
   1. What are the sources of genetic variation?
   2. What is the (commonly accepted) definition of evolution?
   3. What are the four mechanisms of evolutionary change?
   4. Explain how natural selection works.
   Feel free to also check out Bozeman Science's playlist AP Biology Video Essentials.

   This paper (you can start to zoom out at page 971) exemplifies the points below. Keep these points in mind when reading the paper and check back to Berkeley (links above) when necessary.
   1. Natural selection and how this
      a. ... requires variation in genetics and morphology
      b. ... is driven by environmental changes
      c. ... realized through the death of individuals
   2. Speciation (speciation can be rapid!)
   3. The importance of culture (yes, finches have culture)
   4. An example of a bottleneck in relation to speciation (cont. next page)
   5. That evolution and natural selection can strongly change morphology without leading to speciation (see Figure 6 in Grant & Grant, 2003)
After reading the paper, think about / discuss
- Is there a predictive value in the term "fitness" or must be described post hoc? [Here is a definition of fitness for those unafraid of some math.]
- If El Niño did not occur, would the same finks still have the greatest fitness? (On that note, if a meteor had not randomly impacted Earth about 65 million years ago, which species would have had the greatest fitness today?)

6/12-2018 Lecture 1c: Primate evolution, human tool use and culture
Lecturer: Henrik Nordström
The main idea of the lecture and literature below is to give you a basic orientation of primate evolution and some important time points in our history of tool use and (agri)culture. Again, the goal is to give you some handles to refer back to in future seminars. The lecture will also touch on lessons and potential pitfalls from studies on modern hunter-gatherers.

Literature
The earliest stone tools date some 2.5 million years and tool use is widespread among other living primates. Complex tools, language and burials however are younger, but this paper argues that the capacity for complex culture was present at least 170,000 years ago. In reading the paper, keep the following questions in mind:
1. What are the arguments for dating the capacity for culture to 170,000 years (or more) ago?
2. What species of homo existed during that time frame? (Check back to Smithsonian.)
3. Why is complex culture much younger than the capacity for complex culture?

A hallmark of WEIRDs culture is agriculture and the introduction of agricultures is often seen as a drastic step away from our (mythical) EEA. Although a bit old, this paper nicely summarize when the birth of agriculture occurred, how much slower and gradual the shift was then previously thought, and that the agricultural shift probably was not connected with the move to villages and cities.

3. Smithsonian Institutions online material
The Smithsonian Institution has some great online material on human evolution, please browse the webpage but especially check out the timeline, family tree, and species pages. Feel free to also check out this documentary.

11/12-2018 Seminar 1 Basic concepts
Henrik Nordström
The instructions for this seminar are slightly different from those specified for the other seminars. This seminar will check that you have understood the basic concepts from the first lectures. The 3-5 questions submitted to this seminar should therefore focus on what specific concepts that you need help from your co-students to understand (e.g., what does fitness actually mean?, What is genotype vs. phenotype? What is sexual selection?)

11/12-2018 Lecture 2 Prosocial behavior and cooperation
Lecturer: Kimmo Eriksson
The lecture will present the gene-culture co-evolutionary approach to prosociality and cooperation, the kind of experimental evidence that it relies on, and criticism of it. The two
papers you are required to read will present one positive review of this approach and one example of critical examination of this kind of experimental evidence.

**Literature**


**13/12-18: Seminar 2 Prosocial behavior and cooperation**

*Kimmo Eriksson*

**13/12-2018 Lecture 3: Attractiveness and mate preferences**

*Lecturer: Torun Lindholm*

The main idea of this lecture and literature below is to give a basic orientation in evolutionary oriented research on what people see as attractive in others. The lecture will also critically discuss findings of gender differences in mate preferences.

**Literature**

Averaged composite faces are generally more attractive than the component faces used to make them. It has been suggested that average faces are attractive because of their central location in a distribution of faces (ie because of their prototypicality) and that what is central is determined by experience. This paper examines how people rate the attractiveness of people of a mixed Asian and European background faces generated as morphs between these two groups.
The current paper reviews and discusses a) the mate preferences literature and associated evolutionary perspective, b) the recent challenge to this work, c) issues that have arisen with the challenge, and d) empirical work to respond to those issues.

**18/12- 2018 Seminar 3: Attractiveness and mate preferences**

*Torun Lindholm*

**18/12- 2018 Lecture 4: Caregiving and attachment**

*Lecturer: Tommie Forslund*

**Literature**

20/12-2018 Lecture 5: Aggression
Lecturer: Torun Lindholm
This lecture and literature presents different explanations to human aggression, and in particular the main ideas in evolutionary perspectives on aggression. Moreover, gender differences in aggression, and evolutionary accounts on violence against children are reviewed and discussed.

Literature
   This paper presents a discussion on gender differences in aggression among the most prominent scholars within the field.
   This paper presents research on differences in violence against children perpetrated by genetic fathers vs. stepfathers. The findings are explained in terms of evolutionary psychology.

8/1-2019 Seminar 5: Aggression
Torun Lindholm

8/1-2019 Lecture 6: Intergroup prejudice and conflicts
Lecturer: Torun Lindholm
This lecture presents different evolutionary approaches to in-group bias, ethnocentrism, outgroup derogation and conflict.

Literature
   This paper presents an evolutionary perspective on in-group bias that challenges several common assumptions about the nature of such biases.
   This paper presents a set of studies examining the role of a disease-avoidance mechanism, pathogen disgust, in modern xenophobic attitudes.

10/1-2019 Seminar 6: Intergroup prejudice and conflicts
Torun Lindholm

10/1-2019 Lecture 7: The evolution of language
Lecturer: Julia Uddén
The main idea of the lecture is to give an introduction to different perspectives on why and how language evolved among humans and how it differs to other species. A Comparative approach is presented in the paper by (Fitch, 2000). Another perspective on language and speech is whether there are gender differences and why they evolved. the benefits and costs of a lower male voice is discussed in the paper by (Simmons, Peters, & Rhodes, 2011).

Literature

15/1- 2019 Seminar 7: The evolution of language
Julia Uddén

Free paper!

Behavioral genetics link genes to behavior and psychological traits (a topic sure to come up during the seminars). The impact of genetics on behavior often seems to be grossly over- or underestimated, perhaps because single studies are not reliable. This paper summarize what we have learned from behavioral genetics, a summary which could in turn be (tongue-in-cheek) summarized as
1. There is some genetic influence on most psychological traits,
2. but the environment also has a strong influence, and
3. there is no “aggression gene” or any specific gene “for a behavior”.

In relation to this paper, think about / discuss
1. How genes influence environments (Finding 7).
2. Why the correlation between genes and intelligence increase with age (rather than decrease which perhaps is more intuitive) (Finding 5.)
3. How genes can explain (mediate) a correlation between psychological traits (Finding 4