Course outline and instructions for
PSMT53
Social behavior-
Insights from Evolutionary Psychology

December 3 2020 – January 18 2021

Course leader
Professor Torun Lindholm
Course content
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, Basic concepts, 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
Upon completing the course students are expected to:
- understand, describe and critically reflect on aspects of evolutionary theory as applied in the context of social psychology.
- describe, analyze and critically reflect on theoretical and empirical issues in evolutionary psychology with a focus on areas that relate to human social behaviour.
- demonstrate skills required to participate in research, such as an ability to clearly present and discuss their conclusions and the knowledge and arguments behind them, orally in dialogue with others and in writing.

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.

Course leader: Professor Torun Lindholm, tlm@psychology.su.se
Instructors:
Professor Kimmo Eriksson (kimmoe@gmail.com)
Professor Pehr Granqvist
PhD Tina Sundelin
Associate professor Julia Uddén

Educational activities, course requirements and mandatory components
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.

Mandatory parts are
(a) Submission of three to five questions based on the literature for each seminar
(b) Active participation in all seminars
(c) Leadership of at least one seminar during the course.
(d) Review paper

To reach the course goals, students need to submit discussion questions to, and actively participate in every seminar, lead 1-2 seminars and receive a grade of E or higher on the seminar activities and the review paper. Student tasks related to the seminars and review paper are described below. Students who do not pass (a) above will be offered the possibility to submit a written complementary task. Students who have missed a maximum of two of the mandatory seminars (b), or (c) above will be offered a chance to complete a supplementary assignment during the course period. Students who have missed more than two seminars will be given opportunities to come in with
complementary assignments twice during the forthcoming semester (see below). Regarding (d), see below.

**Examination**
The examination is based on the completion of written seminar questions, active participation in every seminar, leading of 1-2 seminars, and a review paper.

The specific course grade is based to 50% on the seminar activities, and to 50% on the individually written review paper. Letter grades in the course are A (Excellent), B (Very good), C (Good), D (Satisfactory), E (Sufficient), Fx (Fail, some additional work required), F (much additional work required).

*a) and b) Submission of questions and active participation in seminar discussions.*

The lectures are followed by a seminar, in which issues related to the lecture topic are discussed. Active participation in seminars means that you take part in the discussion with questions and comments.

Before each seminar, each student must individually generate and submit a minimum of three written questions. You must submit discussion questions to ALL seminars, even the ones you missed.

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.

Contribution to class will be worth 50% of your final grade. This part of your grade will be based on the instructor's assessment of your understanding of central concepts and usage of scientific literature on the target topic, together with the extent of your participation in class discussions. More detailed grading criteria will be presented when the course starts.

**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.

If seminar questions are not uploaded on time (late submission or missed out submission), or if the instructions above are not fulfilled a complementary paper is required. This complementary paper is based on the specific topic to be discussed during the seminar (see under Complement missed seminar below).

**Complement missed seminar**

Students who have missed a **maximum of two compulsory seminars** must submit (1) questions (see under *a) and b* above)+ (2) written supplementary information as a substitute for the seminars you missed.
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.**

Note that only complements of a maximum of two missed seminar will be examined within the course period. Students who have missed **more than two compulsory seminars** will be given opportunities to come in with complementary assignments according to 1) and 2) above once during the spring semester. Deadline for submission of these complementary assignments will be Friday February 26, 2021 at 16.00. The complements will then be examined within two weeks.

c) **Leading the discussion.** Students will each take responsibility for leading the discussion with partners in their respective group (2-3 students) for 1-2 seminars (number depending on enrollment) during the course period. Leading the discussion will entail the following: 1) Summarizing key points to be gleaned from the articles we’ve read for that seminar, 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 seminar.

d) **Individual review paper**
The aim of this paper is to allow students to focus and elaborate on one of the topics included in the course, or clearly related to the course content. The topic should be chosen according to the student’s interests, and the paper should include an extended empirical and theoretical review of the target topic. Grading of the paper will be based on the student’s understanding and usage of scientific literature, analysis of scientific evidence on the target topic, conclusions based on the review, and general ability of written presentation (structure and coherence of the text, grammar, etc.). More detailed grading criteria will be presented when the course starts. The paper should not include findings from the student’s own ongoing projects. As the paper should be a review of the literature on a given topic, no data should be collected for the paper.

The paper is to be saved in word format (not pdf or any other format for instance pages), and shall comprise between no less than 3000 and no more than 5000 words (excluding title leaf and reference list), 12p and single spacing (1.0). At least six peer-reviewed scientific papers should be included in the paper. At the end of the text there shall be a reference list. References (both in the body of text and in the reference list) shall be in APA-format. Remember that the main criteria for grading of this paper is the quality of your text, rather than the number of words or references. The deadline for submission of the review paper is **Friday January 18th 2021 at 16.00.** To check for plagiarism the paper is to be uploaded on Athena before this deadline. The uploaded version of the paper is then graded after the closing of the deadline. No changes can then be made to
the text. Any deviation from instructions will render a reduction in grade. Note however that the task will not be graded if it has been submitted after the deadline and/or if it does not meet requirements regarding the references and/or regarding word limitation (see above).

In cases where a paper is not submitted in time, or was given the grade Fx, there are later deadlines for a first submission or of a revised version of the paper. Papers that are revised or submitted after the deadline can receive a maximum of a grade E. Submission after the deadline on January 17th, or revised papers should be sent to the course leader before Friday February 28, 2020 at 16.00, or before Friday June 5th, 2020 at 16.00. The paper will then be graded within two weeks.

**Plagiarism, cheating and unallowed cooperation**

It is your responsibility as a student to be aware of the examination rules at Stockholm University. Detailed information is available both at the web pages of the Department of Psychology and Stockholm University (see links at Athena). Teachers are obliged to report suspicion about cheating and plagiarism to the principle and the disciplinary board. Plagiarism and cheating are always disciplinary matters and can lead to shutting off from studies. One example of plagiarism is to verbatim (word-by-word) or almost verbatim – regardless if a source has been given – copy a text (also concerns occasional sentences) and not refer to the source of the text. This also concerns texts that you have yourself authored previously (self-plagiarism). To be involved in study groups is developing and time efficient, but when it comes to examination tasks you will need make sure that you are working on your own (if nothing else is instructed) in order not to risk that any collaboration will be considered unallowed.

Rules and regulations at SU regarding plagiarism, cheating and unallowed cooperation can be found here:

Instructions and reading for specific lectures and seminars

3/12-2020 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

3/12-2020 Lecture 1b: Evolution – Basic concepts
Lecturer: Tina Sundelin
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?)

8/12-2020 Seminar 1: Basic concepts
Tina Sundelin
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?)

8/12-2020 Lecture 2: Caregiving and attachment
Lecturer: Pehr Granqvist

Literature

10/12-2020 Seminar 2: Caregiving and attachment
Pehr Granqvist

10/12-2020 Lecture 3: 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

15/12-18: Seminar 3: Prosocial behavior and cooperation
Kimmo Eriksson

15/12 Lecture 4: 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 (i.e. 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.

**17/12-2020 Seminar 4: Attractiveness and mate preferences**

_Torun Lindholm_

**17/12-2020 Lecture 5: The evolution of language**

_Lecturer: Julia Uddén_

This lecture presents two main hypothesis on driving factors of language evolution as well as non-human primate data bearing on the issue (see Seyfarth and Cheney 2014). The first hypothesis is the "Communication"-hypothesis, represented in Scott-Phillips (2015) and the other one I will present as the "Dendrophilia"-hypothesis. A radical but well-known version of this alternative hypothesis is present in Berwick et al. (2013)

**Literature**


**22/12-2020 Seminar 5: The evolution of language**

_Julia Uddén_

**22/12-2020 Lecture 6: 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.

**12/1-2020 Seminar 5: Aggression**

*Torun Lindholm*

**12/1-2020 Lecture 7: 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.

**14/1-2020 Seminar 7: Intergroup prejudice and conflicts**

*Torun Lindholm*

**12/1-2020 Wrap-up**

*Torun Lindholm*