

Introduction to Biological Anthropology  
Anthropology 201.1, Fall 2008  
Tues & Thurs 5:25-6:40  
Stevenson 1002

<http://bruceowen.com/introbiological/201-08f-1.htm>

Dr. Bruce Owen  
Office: Stevenson 3007  
Office hours: Tu & Th 4:00-5:00, Th 12:30-1:30  
Phone (I rarely check voicemail!): 664-2875  
Box in Anthro office: Stevenson 2054  
Email: [bruce.owen@sonoma.edu](mailto:bruce.owen@sonoma.edu)

## Introduction to Biological Anthropology

**Objectives:** Where did we come from? Why do we look and behave as we do? In this class, we will think about these questions from a biological point of view. A lot of things about people are understandable (in part) in terms of how our bodies work and interact with the physical and social environment. This seemingly simple focus will lead us from genetics, to non-human primates, to the fossil evidence of our ancestors, to modern human biology, variation, and behavior. What links all this together is the theory of evolution, an elegant framework that helps to explain how and why we came to be as we are.

This course is meant to help you understand and apply the *theory of evolution*, one of the most fundamental insights ever made into the nature of life. We will start with the basics of Darwin's theory of natural selection, add a little bit of genetics, and arrive at a qualitative understanding of evolution, which we will use to understand variation in modern human populations.

Then we will use evolutionary theory to look at our living *non-human primate relatives*, which offer some of the best clues about what animals of our kind are capable of, and how our distant ancestors may have lived. Evolutionary explanations will help you make sense of information about different primates. You will personally observe two non-human primate species first hand in a zoo and use evolutionary concepts to help explain their physiques and behavior.

Next, we will look at the *fossil (and other) evidence for the evolution of humans*, in a search for our own origins. You will learn about some of the developments that led from our distant, rodent-like ancestors to humans as we are today, and some evolutionary models that have been proposed to explain these changes.

Throughout the course, and especially in a brief section at the end, we will apply these *evolutionary ideas to modern people*. We will look at geographic variation in humans and the controversial concept of "race". We will use evolutionary reasoning to understand how people adapt to different environments, what happens when groups of people migrate, how we think, how we choose mates, and how we marry.

You should finish this course with a clearer idea of where humans come from, and why we are as we are. Your understanding of evolution should help you look at people and other living things around you in a new way. Genetics, evolution, and human variation are often in the news. This course should help you put these developments in context, and see why they are interesting.

**GE requirement:** This course satisfies the lower division Natural Sciences and Mathematics Specific Emphasis (B3) General Education requirement.

**Class web page:** You are responsible for checking the class web page regularly. It will change during the semester, and it takes precedence over information in this syllabus. The assigned readings, lecture notes and slides, homework assignments, due dates, and other information will all be posted there. You can click to it from the SSU "Class web pages" list, or go to:

<http://bruceowen.com/introbiological/201-08f-1.htm>

**Class User ID and password:** Due to copyright issues, you need a class user ID and password to access some material on the class web page. These are *not* the same ID and password that you use for other SSU functions. I will provide them in class. If you forget them, ask or email me.

**Schedule of readings, assignments, etc:** The schedule of readings, assignments, due dates, and tests is posted on the class web page. Please read the selections *before* the class session. Readings range from 7 to 37 pages per class meeting, averaging around 20, plus multimedia material from the CD that comes with the book. The reading assignments are longer towards the end of the course. You are responsible for the readings, whether the material is covered in class or not.

**Textbook:** This course has one textbook, which comes with a CD. Readings are assigned from both. The book and CD are:

Boyd, Robert, and Joan B. Silk

2006 *How Humans Evolved*. Fourth edition. Norton. (Book)

Walker, Phillip L., and Edward H. Hagen

2006 *Human Evolution: A Multimedia Guide to the Fossil Record*. Norton. (CD)

The book and included CD are available at North Light Books & Cafe, 550 East Cotati Ave., next to Oliver's Market in the shopping complex on East Cotati Ave. (707 792-4300).

**Lecture notes and slides:** My lecture notes and Powerpoint slides used in class will be posted on the web page. The notes will generally be posted before the class, while the Powerpoint slides will be posted after the class. The notes are useful for review, but they are no substitute for attending class and doing the reading. Some students print the lecture notes before class and add their own notes to them during the class discussion.

**Self-evaluated exercises:** Periodically throughout the course I will post optional short-answer exercises on the class web page, as well as the answers to them. You do not submit these, and they are not graded. They may be useful for studying or evaluating how well you understand the material. We may discuss them in class if there is interest.

**Assignments and their weights in grading:**

20% **Non-human primate observation** (Zoo visit). You observe two species of non-human primates at the San Francisco zoo, Oakland zoo, or another zoo of your choice, and complete an observation form about each. Assignment details will be on the class website.

20% **Test 1: Evolution.** In class. Multiple-choice, fill-in, and short-answer questions.

20% **Test 2: Living primates.** In class. Same general format.

20% **Test 3: Evolution of humans.** In class. Same general format.

20% **Test 4: Cumulative final exam.** During the scheduled exam period. Same general format.

**Grading scheme:** This course is graded on a straight percentage scale based on the highest score on each test or assignment. 90% of the highest score is the cutoff for an A, 60% of the highest score is the cutoff for a C, and so on. Each test will have some “extra credit” questions.

**Late assignment policy:** The primate observation project is due at the last class meeting. I will accept it late at the final exam with a 15% grading penalty.

**Email:** I usually reply to emails within 24 hours. If you do not hear from me within 48 hours, assume that I did not get your message and try again.

**Invitation:** If you want help, or would just like to talk about anthropology, assignments, preparing for tests, archaeology, or anything else, please drop by during my office hours, arrange to see me at some other time, or contact me by email.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is using someone else’s words, information, or ideas *without giving that person credit*. This includes copying from your peers, websites, or other public sources, even brief phrases. Always indicate all your sources. Plagiarism results in penalties up to an F for the course. University policy requires me to report plagiarism. The University checks for repeat offenders, and may impose sanctions up to expulsion. A more complete explanation, including advice on how to use material without plagiarizing, is posted on the class website. University policies about plagiarism are available through the University Policies link below.

**Disability accommodations:** If you have a disability and you think you may require accommodations, please register with the campus office of Disability Services for Students (DSS), located in Salazar Hall - Room 1049, Phone: (707) 664-2677, TTY/TDD: (707) 664-2958. DSS will provide you with written confirmation of your verified disability and authorize recommended accommodations. This authorization must be presented to the instructor before any accommodations can be made. If you have a letter from DSS indicating that you are entitled to academic accommodations, please bring it to me so we can discuss arrangements for this class. If you think you may require assistance evacuating a building in the event of a disaster, please let me know what type of assistance you think you may need.

**University policies:** There are important University policies that you should be aware of, such as the add/drop policy; cheating and plagiarism policy, grade appeal procedures, accommodations for students with disabilities and the diversity vision statement. You can see them at:

<http://www.sonoma.edu/uaffairs/policies/studentinfo.shtml>

**Final exam:** Tuesday, December 16, 5:00-6:50, Stevenson 1002.