

HBIO 308: Origins and Evolution of Human Behavior

Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00 – 3:20 pm

SSL 202

Note: This [draft syllabus](#) provides an overview of course content, but is [subject to revision](#).**Instructor:** Maureen McCarthy, PhD (she/her/hers)**Office Hours:** By appointment, via Zoom**Email:** msmccart@usc.edu**Website:** <https://blackboard.usc.edu>

Course Description: This course explores human evolutionary history and behavior from a biological perspective. We will examine the issues and competing hypotheses for a range of behaviors, including reproductive strategies and cooperation, based on evolutionary principles. This course will provide an understanding of ecological and evolutionary processes including the role of genetic variation and natural selection, as well as their implications for human origins. The goal of this course is for you to expand your ability to articulate a clear understanding of human behavioral evolution and think critically about scientific information. We will begin with a discussion of evolutionary theory, including natural and sexual selection. Next, we will critically assess theories of human origins. Finally, we will examine the biological basis for human behaviors. A major component of this course will be class discussion and participation, as well as writing critiques for specific topics and articles.

Learning Objectives:

1. understand how to critically read primary research literature and apply scientific principles to the study of human evolutionary history and behavior
2. gain hands-on experience in using comparative anatomy to assess hypotheses in human evolutionary biology
3. improve critical thinking and communication skills (both oral and written)

Required Readings:

Readings can be found on the course Blackboard site. *Please note that readings may be added during the semester. I will give you updates during class when readings are added.*

Grading:

1. Exam 1	25%
2. Exam 2	25%
3. Exam 3	25%
4. Class Participation	15%
5. Article Critiques	10%
TOTAL	100%

Grades are based on the following traditional grading scale, and are not rounded up: A $\geq 94\%$, A- $\geq 90\%$, B+ $\geq 87\%$, B $\geq 84\%$, B- $\geq 80\%$, C+ $\geq 77\%$, C $\geq 74\%$, C- $\geq 70\%$, D+ $\geq 67\%$, D $\geq 64\%$, D- $\geq 60\%$, F $\leq 59.9\%$

Exams: There will be 3 exams during the semester to integrate knowledge about major themes of the course. These will be mixed-format exams administered during class sessions. More information about exam format and content will be provided early in the semester.

Article Critiques: Thoughtful and critical evaluation of primary research articles is an important part of this course. Students will engage in critical thinking about research throughout the semester, and will demonstrate these skills in brief, written critiques of research articles. More details about article critiques will be provided early in the semester.

Participation: In-class discussions are a key component of the course. All students are expected to come prepared by reading assigned material prior to each class session and contributing to in-class discussions. Online participation via Blackboard is an acceptable alternative to in-class participation in cases of absence. More guidelines for participation will be provided early in the semester.

Missed/late assignments: In case of illness, students SHOULD NOT attend class. Make-up assignments and exams may be permitted, and students should contact Dr. McCarthy if any issues arise. Article critiques received up to one week late will receive a penalty of 10% per day applied to the assignment grade. Students who submit assignments more than one week late will receive a grade of 0 unless they have made prior arrangements with the instructor.

Other Important Information:

COVID-19 Policy: Students are expected to comply with all aspects of USC's COVID-19 policy. Failure to do so may result in removal from the class and referral to Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards.

Communication: For any questions or concerns about the course, or to schedule a virtual office hour meeting, please email me at msmccart@usc.edu. Email is the preferred way to contact me. I will typically respond within 24-48 hours.

Online Accommodations: This course will be held in person during Fall 2021. However, some accommodations will be made to help ensure the health and safety of students. These include the following:

- Students **should not attend class** if they are experiencing any symptoms of illness.
- If needed, class can be held virtually using the Zoom link for this course (available on Blackboard). In the event that a class session must be held online, students will be informed via email in advance.
- Students are expected to participate in in-person discussions each week, but can use the Blackboard Discussion Board to participate as needed. More details on participation guidelines will be provided early in the semester.
- Office hours will be held virtually via Zoom. Email me to schedule a time to meet via Zoom.
- Other online accommodations will be made as needed during the semester. Please contact me with any questions or concerns about in-person and online learning.

Discussion Etiquette: Engaged discussion is a key component of this course. This means each student is expected to contribute to discussion each week in a thoughtful, respectful, and well-informed manner. In this course, we will commit ourselves to fostering an environment of diversity, equity, and inclusion that adheres to the USC Principles of Community: <https://diversity.usc.edu/usc-principles-of-community/>

Further guidelines for course discussions will be provided early in the semester.

Sharing Course Material

Sharing course content outside the course environment—including any course recordings, presentation materials, quizzes, and other content—is prohibited, as per USC policy:

SCampus Section 11.12(B)

Distribution or use of notes or recordings based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study is a violation of the USC Student Conduct Code. This includes, but is not limited to, providing materials for distribution by services publishing class notes. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the Internet or via any other media. (See Section C.1 Class Notes Policy).

Note: This policy also refers to study websites like Chegg and Coursehero; uploading course materials to these sites is strictly prohibited.

Course Schedule (*Subject to revision*)

Week	Date	Topic	Assigned Readings*
Part 1: Evolutionary Principles and Our Primate Origins			
1	Tues 8/24	Course introduction	
	Thurs 8/26	Principles of evolutionary theory	
2	Tues 8/31	Forces of evolution	Mayr (2001)
	Thurs 9/2	Adaptations	Gould and Lewontin (1979)
3	Tues 9/7	Primate origins and early evolution	Cartmill (1992)
	Thurs 9/9	Anthropoid origins	Ross (2000)
4	Tues 9/14	Miocene hominoids	Maclatchy (2004)
	Thurs 9/16	Biomechanics of walking and running	Preuschoft (2004); Raichlen and Pontzer (2021)
5	Tues 9/21	Exam review	
	Thurs 9/23	EXAM 1	
Part 2: Human Origins			
6	Tues 9/28	Earliest hominins	Brunet et al. (2002)
	Thurs 9/30	Australopithecines	Kimbel (2007); Laden and Wrangham (2005)
7	Tues 10/5	Earliest <i>Homo</i>	Wood and Collard (1999)
	Thurs 10/7	<i>Homo erectus</i>	Anton (2003)
8	Tues 10/12	Movie	
	Thurs 10/14	<i>No Class—Fall Recess</i>	
9	Tues 10/19	Archaic <i>Homo sapiens</i> , Neandertals	Herrera et al. (2009)
	Thurs 10/21	Origins of <i>Homo sapiens</i>	Cann et al. (1987); Pearson (2004)
10	Tues 10/26	Exam Review	
	Thurs 10/28	EXAM 2	
Part 3: Behavior in Evolutionary Context			
11	Tues 11/2	Darwinian approaches to human behavior	Cartwright Chs. 1, 2
	Thurs 11/4	Reproduction, mating, parenting	Cartwright Chs. 13, 14
12	Tues 11/9	Life history and rearing effects	Cartwright Chs. 8, 17
	Thurs 11/11	Prosociality	Cartwright Chs. 3,11; Article topic and list due
13	Tues 11/16	Competition and conflict	Cartwright Ch. 12
	Thurs 11/18	Communication and language	Cartwright Ch. 6
14	Tues 11/23	Culture, identity, and intelligence	Cartwright Chs. 9, 16, 20
	Thurs 11/25	<i>No Class—Thanksgiving</i>	
15	Tues 11/30	Exam review	
	Thurs 12/2	EXAM 3	
Summative article critiques due Thursday, December 9 by 2 PM Pacific Time			

**Additional readings may be assigned occasionally for some classes. You will be notified about these and they will be posted on Blackboard at least one week in advance of the class for which they are assigned.*

USC's Statements on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, "Behavior Violating University Standards" policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call

suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press "0" after hours – 24/7 on call

studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) - (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298

equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776

dsp.usc.edu

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710

campussupport.usc.edu

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.

Office of the Ombuds - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

ombuds.usc.edu

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.