

Evolutionary and Biological Anthropology

ANTH 6605 – Fall 2023

Time: W 5:30 – 8:15pm

Location: Barnard 244 – Janet Levi Seminar Room

Instructor: Dr. Lydia E. O. Light

Email: llight1@charlotte.edu

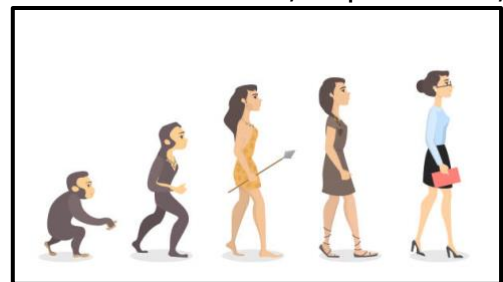
Office: Barnard 215

Office hours by appointment, in person or over Zoom



COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will introduce you to several theories and topical areas found within evolutionary and biological anthropology. You will learn about evolutionary theory, the place of biological anthropology in academia, primatology, paleoanthropology, the origins of modern human populations, genetics, human health and disease, reproduction, modern human biology, and forensic anthropology. One major goal of the course will be to develop critical thinking skills for academic inquiry at the graduate level. The course will also develop independent research skills, requiring you to find peer-reviewed articles addressing thought-provoking questions related to that week's topic.



TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

My approach to teaching focuses on the power of experiential knowledge. Therefore, I include as many opportunities for my students to emotionally engage with the material presented. I also feel that students in my courses should be gaining skills that apply to other courses and professionalism in general.

****Statement on Social Justice: As anthropologists, we are committed to making the world safe for human differences, and to serving students of all identities and from all backgrounds. As a part of that, this class is explicitly anti-racist. I will not tolerate racist and discriminatory language and beliefs.

****Statement on Gender Equality: This course affirms people of all gender expressions and gender identities. If the name listed on the class roster is incorrect, please let me know. Please correct me on your gender pronoun if I make a mistake. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

You are expected to **take responsibility for your learning** in this course. This includes attending seminar, leading seminar when assigned, completing assigned readings, participating in class discussions, turning in all assignments on time and keeping up to date on Canvas. Therefore, class attendance is crucial for successful completion of the course. You are all encouraged to visit me during my office hours for assistance. All changes in course content and schedule will be announced as far in advance as is feasible.

READINGS

There is only one assigned text for this course (*Superior – The Return of Race Science*, Angela Saini, ISBN-13: 978-0807076910). However, that does not mean that you are not required to read for the course. Instead, **you are required to find peer-reviewed articles/chapters that are appropriate for answering the assigned questions that week beginning in week 4.** We will compile a list of all readings used by all participants throughout the semester using EndNote or Zotero.

WEEKLY RESPONSES

Each week, all of you except the discussion leader must turn in a short, ~250 word response to each of the three discussion questions (for a total of ~750 words). All answers must be submitted for feedback **AND** posted on the Discussion Board on Canvas by **5:00 pm on the Monday** before seminar. You will be allowed to skip one week's responses without penalty. Weekly responses will be graded on relevance and depth of argument, appropriateness of references, and writing style. All papers should be written in a formal, academic style. See Canvas for further details.

DISCUSSION LEADING

Each week, two students will be responsible for leading our class discussion based on both the questions assigned and the response papers written by their peers. You will rotate throughout the semester to ensure equal responsibility. Topics will be chosen during the first seminar meeting.

PARTICIPATION

In-class discussion will form a substantial portion of this course. You will be evaluated on both your attendance and your contribution to class discussion. Contributions to class discussion will be measured during each class period by frequency, relevance, and depth.

Note: Seminar courses are most productive and rewarding when everybody comes prepared and everybody participates. During class, please monitor your contributions so that everyone has the opportunity to participate. For example, consider constructing your contributions in class as responses to your peers' weekly thought papers or follow-up questions to your peers' class comments. In this way, you will be significantly contributing to an ongoing, constructive dialogue about course materials.

FINAL PAPER

You will all write an end-of-semester paper (15-20 pages) that deals in-depth with one topic related to evolutionary or biological anthropology. A topic statement and preliminary list of references (at least five peer-reviewed articles) must be turned in to Dr. Light by **5 PM on October 15th**. Final papers are due in Canvas by Wednesday, **December 6th, 5 PM**.

PAPER PRESENTATION

On the day of the final exam, you will summarize your paper's argument in a 10-minute presentation. The presentation will be assessed on both delivery and content.

GRADING

This course will be embracing the "ungrading" policy that has been developed recently (see the [recent edited volume by Drs. Alfie Kohn and Susan Blum here](#)). This **DOES NOT MEAN** that you do not have work to complete this course. What it does mean is that when you complete an assignment, you will receive full credit and *extensive* feedback from me and you are expected to read that feedback and *implement it for future assignments*. At midterm and at the end of the semester, you will be asked to tell me what grade (A, B, C, D, or F) you think you deserve and to justify that assessment in relation to your performance throughout the course. While I will ultimately be responsible for assigning your final grade, I will rely mostly on your self-assessments.

LATE WORK AND GRADE DISPUTE POLICIES

Late work will always be accepted in this course but assignments have been scaffolded to allow for time for revisions. Therefore, ***falling behind on your coursework may have serious academic consequences***. You should consider your ability to turn assignments in on time when completing your self-assessments. If you feel I have made a grade recording error, you **MUST** contact me to discuss the issue within **2 weeks** of when the grade is posted on Canvas or by the last day of class if during the final two weeks of the semester. Any disputes brought to my attention after that point will not be addressed as you are responsible for monitoring your grades.

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

My classroom is a place where open-minded, independent thinking is encouraged. To facilitate this environment, you are expected to act with respect and maturity towards your fellow students, the instructor, and any visiting speakers. Some of the material covered in class may be perceived as controversial. Please remain respectful of your classmates (and instructor) during discussions of such nature. Each of us may have strongly differing opinions on the various topics of class discussions. The orderly questioning of the ideas of others, including mine, is welcome. However, I will manage the discussions so that ideas and argument can proceed in an orderly fashion. You should expect that if your conduct during class discussions seriously disrupts the atmosphere of mutual respect I expect in this class, you will not be permitted to participate further.

POLICY ON VISITORS IN THE CLASSROOM

Academia is not structured in a way that is conducive to the multi-faceted lives of our student body here at UNC Charlotte and elsewhere throughout the country. Due to these structural limitations, I explicitly welcome guests in the classroom in the event that other arrangements cannot be made. This includes breastfeeding infants, school-aged children with school holidays, young children for whom regular childcare is temporarily not available, older individuals under your care, and any other reasonable situation. If you plan to bring a guest to class, please consider the nature of the material to be covered in class that day as many of our course discussions will include mature topics.

COMMUNICATION POLICY

I try to be available as much as possible. In addition to being available during office hours, feel free to email me at lighth1@charlotte.edu with questions. I will respond to emails within 24 hours, but usually much sooner. However, if there is no question in the email that needs to be answered or the question is explicitly stated here in the syllabus, this email will not be of high priority to me and may not be answered quickly.

ON CAMPUS RESOURCES AND UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Jamil Niner Student Pantry (JNSP): Food insecurity is defined by the USDA as “a lack of access to enough food for an active, healthy life.” Food insecure categories include: reduced caloric intake, reduced food quality, lack of variety in diet, disrupted eating patterns, and hunger. Research shows that college students experience food insecurity at higher rates than the American household rate, and that food insecurity can negatively impact academic performance and persistence. In recognition of this problem, UNC Charlotte offers assistance to students facing food insecurity through an on-campus food pantry. The JNSP is located on the east edge of campus at 1224 John Kirk Road. It has regular hours which may change from semester to semester; please see the website at <https://ninerpantry.charlotte.edu/> for schedule and details on its services, as well as resources about hunger and food insecurity among college students.

Office of Identity, Equity, and Engagement: A diverse student body is one of UNC Charlotte’s most powerful tools for preparing future graduates for careers in an increasingly globalized society. If you hold marginalized identities or you are looking for ways to support your colleagues through allyship, the Division of Student Affairs offers [a variety of diversity programs and services](#) related to ability/disability, gender identity, language, race, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and other forms of diversity.

Title IX Reporting Policy: UNC Charlotte is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences any of these incidents, know that you are not alone. UNC Charlotte has

staff members trained to support you in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more.

Please be aware that many UNC Charlotte employees, including all faculty members, are considered [Responsible Employees](#) who are required to relay any information or reports of sexual misconduct they receive to the Title IX Coordinator. This means that if you tell me about a situation involving sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking, I must report the information to the Title IX Coordinator. Although I have to report the situation, you will still have options about how your case will be handled, including whether or not you wish to pursue a formal complaint. If you wish to speak to someone confidentially, you can contact any of the following on-campus resources, who are not required to report the incident to the Title IX Coordinator: (1) [University Counseling Center](#) (7-0311); or (2) [Student Health Center](#) (7-7400); or (3) Department of Athletics psychologist (tbrandt5@charlotte.edu). Additional information about your options is also available at titleix.uncc.edu under the "Students" tab.

Academic Assistance & Accommodations: I encourage all of my students to seek out additional assistance if they are concerned about their academic performance (and even if they are not). I am always available to meet with students either during my office hours or by appointment. In addition, the university provides a number of services designed to help students excel academically. Students in this course seeking accommodations to disabilities must first consult with the [Office of Disability Services](#) and follow the instructions of that office for obtaining accommodations.

Scholastic Dishonesty: While I recognize that adjusting to college academics can be a challenging time, I do not tolerate any form of academic dishonesty in my class. I will not tolerate any attempts to manipulate grading opportunities or misappropriate credit for work done and will penalize any student violating the university policies on scholastic dishonesty. I reserve the right to ask students to demonstrate that graded assignments completed outside of class are their own work. All students are required to read and abide by the [Code of Student Academic Integrity](#). Violations of the Code of Student Academic Integrity, including plagiarism, will result in disciplinary action as provided in the Code. Definitions and examples of plagiarism are set forth in the Code.

Ethical Learning Expectations: All students and instructors are expected to engage with each other respectfully. Unwelcome conduct directed toward another person based upon that person's actual or perceived race, actual or perceived gender, religion, age, national origin, ethnicity, disability, or veteran status, or for any other reason, may constitute a violation of University Policy 406, The Code of Student Responsibility.

Any student suspected of engaging in such conduct will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. All students are required to abide by the [UNC Charlotte Sexual](#)

[Harassment Policy](#) and the policy on [Responsible Use of University Computing and Electronic Communication Resources](#). Sexual harassment, as defined in the UNC Charlotte Sexual Harassment Policy, is prohibited, even when carried out through computers or other electronic communications systems, including course-based chat rooms or message boards.

REVISIONS POLICY

The standards and requirements set forth in this syllabus may be modified at any time by the course instructor. Notice of such changes will be by announcement in class or by changes to this syllabus posted on the course in Canvas.

*** This syllabus contains the policies and expectations I have established for Seminar in Evolutionary and Biological Anthropology. Please read the entire syllabus carefully before continuing in this course. These policies and expectations are intended to create a productive learning atmosphere for all students. Unless you are prepared to abide by these policies and expectations, you risk losing the opportunity to participate further in the course.

CALENDAR AND TOPICAL QUESTIONS

Week 2, August 30: Angela Saini – SUPERIOR, PART 1 – **DR. LIGHT**

- 1) Why do you think Saini felt they needed to write this book?
- 2) How does this view differ from bioanthropology's dealings with race throughout time?
- 3) How can modern anthropologists use this information to affect social change?

Week 3, September 6: Angela Saini – SUPERIOR, PART 2 – **DR. LIGHT**

- 1) Why do you think Saini felt they needed to write this book?
- 2) How does this view differ from bioanthropology's dealings with race throughout time?
- 3) How can modern anthropologists use this information to affect social change?

Week 4, September 13: SCIENCE STUDIES –

- 1) Does anthropology belong in the humanities or the sciences?
- 2) Is there an objective Truth in science?
- 3) What challenges do anthropologists face in presenting their research as science?

Week 5, September 20: BIOLOGICAL EVOLUTION –

- 1) Why are classic evolutionary examples (peppered moths, houseflies, finches, etc.) difficult to compare to modern humans?
- 2) What is the best example of human evolution that can be seen in modern populations?
- 3) How is human evolution taught in US K-12 schools and how can we make it better?

Week 6, September 27: PRIMATOLOGY –

- 1) How do ecological/environmental characteristics influence primate behavior?
- 2) In what ways do nonhuman primates impact the environment in which they live?
- 3) Do nonhuman primates have culture?

Week 7, October 4: PALEOANTHROPOLOGY –

- 1) How did "Lucy" die?
- 2) How do the recent discoveries – such as that of *Homo floresiensis*, *Homo naledi*, the Denisovans (and "Dragon Man"), and *Homo luzonensis* – change our understandings of hominin evolution?
- 3) Who were the Neanderthals and what became of them?

Week 8, October 11: PALEO PEOPLES: FOOD AND TECHNOLOGY –

- 1) Did hominins have smokin' hot bods from the Paleo Diet and exercise? Should we try to recreate their lifestyles?
- 2) What role did nutrition and the acquisition of food play on the peopling of the world?

- 3) What was the most important invention of paleo people and why?

Week 9, October 18: DNA AND GENETICS IN MODERN POPULATIONS –

- 1) What does it mean to say that the way you look is a product of your genes and the environment?
- 2) Was Lamarck correct after all? What is the role of transgenerational epigenetic inheritance in human evolution?
- 3) Are consumer genetic tests (ancestry.com, 23andme, etc.) dangerous?

Week 10, October 25: SEXUAL BEHAVIORS OF NHPs AND HUMANS –

- 1) Have females been selected to be “coy” and highly selective in their reproductive partners and males selected to attempt to “sow their seed” as frequently and widely as possible?
- 2) Were our hominin ancestors monogamous?
- 3) Kyra Sedjwick found out that her husband Kevin Bacon is also her cousin. Should she be worried?

Week 11, November 1: INFANTS AND PARENTHOOD –

- 1) If you were to have a baby (or if you were to support a partner having a baby), would you want a “natural” birth?
- 2) What is the consensus on the importance of breast-feeding, babywearing, cosleeping, and attachment parenting?
- 3) If a child is born as the result of new reproductive technologies, how do we define parenthood?

Week 12, November 8: HEALTH & DISEASE –

- 1) What does height tell us about human populations?
- 2) If we are all biologically human, why do different groups have different lifespans and health outcomes?
- 3) We all die, but when does life actually end? When does it begin?

Week 13, November 15: BIOTECHNOLOGY & FUTURE BIOLOGY –

- 1) Does organ donation create biological kinship?
- 2) What will our bodies look like in 2,000 and 200,000 years from now?
- 3) Are we already cyborgs thanks to technology?

Week 14, November 22: NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 15, November 29: FORENSIC ANTHROPOLOGY –

- 1) What problems do forensic anthropologists face with an increasingly long-lived, globalized society?
- 2) How reliable are biometrics (fingerprints, body shapes, hair analysis, bite marks, DNA) and facial reconstructions?

- 3) Why do forensic anthropologists continue to include race in their biological profiles?

Week 16, December 6: THE FUTURE OF BIOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY –

- 1) What questions will biological anthropologists ask ten years from now? Fifty?
- 2) Have we found all the fossils? What changes will take place in paleoanthropology in the next few decades?
- 3) Why is a four-field approach to anthropology so important for the discipline?

Final Paper Due: December 6, 5 PM

Final Self-Assessment Due: December 11, 5 PM

Assessment Meetings: December 12-15 – by appointment