

ANTH2382 – Human Nature: Who are we? And how did we get this way?
J-Term 2020

K. Ann Horsburgh
10am – 1pm, 2-5pm

Is there such a thing as human nature? And if there is, how would we recognize it when we see it? Notions of human nature, and natural behavior, are readily exploited to justify and maintain social inequalities – claiming ‘the natural’ is a potent power grab – so a rigorous assessment of that which genuinely characterizes human nature is central both to our quest to know ourselves and to the construction of just and effective social policy.

We will use evolutionary theory to do explanatory work in synthesizing evidence from anthropology, biology, and psychology to understand both proximate and ultimate explanations for human behavior. Proximate explanations describe how a behavior develops and manifests, and ultimate explanations document why our evolutionary history has produced the capacity and tendency to exhibit a behavior.

There is no textbook for this class. We will instead read published research from the peer-reviewed scientific research. These papers frequently sacrifice clarity to technical accuracy so can be difficult to read. Read the assignments before coming to class, and bring questions with you. The lectures will expand on the readings and place them in a broader context.

Performance in the class will be assessed with an annotated bibliography (40%) and two examinations (30% each).

Depth: Natural and Applied Sciences

Students will explain the concepts and findings that undergird current scientific theories or engineering practices.

Annotated Bibliography

For this assessment you will choose your own topic of current research relevant to understanding human nature

The annotated bibliography requires that you select 4 – 6 papers on your topic. They must be from the peer-reviewed literature. To find sources, use Google Scholar (found by googling) and/or Web of Science (found in the library’s list of databases). You are to summarise and critically evaluate your chosen papers. The description and evaluation of each paper will be between 200 and 400 words long. The majority of your

chosen papers must be from the last 20 years. One of your papers may be a review, but the rest must be primary literature. We will discuss in class how to tell the difference, but feel free to check with me if you're not sure. Do not include books in your list unless you're confident that you can convince me that you've read the whole thing.

To assist, I list below possible topics and a starter paper. You are not required to make that paper one of your 4-6 papers, but may if you wish. Use it to help you find others. If you wish to pursue a topic not listed below, you may do so but please email the instructor (Horsburgh@smu.edu) to secure permission and guidance. Your final annotated bibliography will be due by email at noon on Friday 16 January. Late assignments will lose 10% for every hour they are late.

Possible Topics:

Communication in Non-Human Animals

- Byrne et al 2004 Understanding culture across species *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 13(4):148-53

Altruism

- Bornstein et al 2002 The effect of intergroup competition on intragroup coordination: An experimental student. *Games and Economic Behaviour* 41:1-15.

War

- Gneezy and Fessler 2012 Conflict, sticks and carrots: war increases prosocial punishments and rewards. *Proceedings of the Royal Society Series B* 279: 219-223.

Religion

- Norenzayan and Shariff 2008 The origin and evolution of religious prosociality *Science* 322: 58-62

Human Sacrifice

- Gneezy and Fessler 2012 Conflict, sticks and carrots: war increases prosocial punishments and rewards. *Proceedings of the Royal Society Series B* 279: 219-223.

Cannibalism

- Bello et al 2015 Upper Palaeolithic ritualistic cannibalism at Gough's Cave (Somerset, UK): The human remains from head to toe *Journal of Human Evolution* 82, 170-189.

Body Modification

- Alfonso-Durruty et al 2015 Antiquity and geographic distribution of cranial modification among the prehistoric groups of Fuego-Patagonia, Chile *AJPA* 158, 607-623.

Homosexuality

- Kirkpatrick 2000 The evolution of human homosexual behavior. *Current Anthropology* 41(3):385-41

Exams

There are two, non-cumulative exams required for this course. The exam format will be in the form of paragraph answer questions. Please note that no early or late tests will be given based on a student's plan to travel out of town. SMU has an official holiday policy: "official class days are not holidays."

The exam is take home. It will be emailed to you via Canvas by gam on Exam Day and you will be required to email your answers back to Horsburgh@smu.edu by 5pm on exam day. Late exams will lose 10% for every hour they are late.

A make-up exam will be given only under the following conditions—excused absences, documented dire emergencies, or documented cases of extreme sickness. A request must be made to the instructor as soon as possible if a student is going to miss an exam. Written documentation explaining the absence will be necessary. No make-up exam will be given without an advanced request.

Monday 6 January

Introduction to the Course

Science to Understand Human Behaviour

Evolutionary Theory – explaining biology and behavior

Behavioural Genetics

- Reading: Sagan, 1997 Science and Hope, in The Demon-Haunted World, p27-42
- Reading: Ayala 2007 Darwin's greatest discovery: Design without designer PNAS 104, 8567-73

Tuesday 7 January

Culture in Non-Human Animals

Cultural Transmission

Theory of Mind

Workshop: Preparing your annotated bibliography

- Reading: Hunt and Gray 2003 Diversification and cumulative evolution in New Caledonian crow tool manufacture. Proc Roy Soc B 270(1517)867-874

Wednesday 8 January

Communication and Language

Altruism and Kin Selection
Cooperation and Policing

- Reading: Harrington et al 2000. Does the queen speak the queen's English? *Nature* 408: 927-928
- Reading: Pepper and Smuts 2002 A mechanism for the evolution of altruism among non-kin. *The American Naturalist* 160(92)205-213

Thursday 9 January

Exam One

Friday 10 January

Aggression and Warfare
Religion and Death Rites
Torture
Cannibalism

- Reading: Mitani et al 2010 Lethal intergroup aggression leads to territorial expansion in wild chimpanzees *Current Biology* 20, R507-R508

Tuesday 14 January

Human Sacrifice
Body Modification
Pair Bonding and Mate Choice
Homosexuality
Gender Roles

- Reading: Rahman and Hull 2005. An empirical test of the kin selection hypothesis for male homosexuality. *Achieves of Sexual Behaviour* 34:461-467

Wednesday 15 January

Parenting and Child Abuse
Menopause and Reproductive Senescence
Race, Ethnicity and Identity

- Reading: Kirkwood and Shanley 2010 The connections between general and reproductive senescence and the evolutionary basis of menopause. *Ann. NY Acad Sci* 1204: 21-29

Thursday 16 January

Exam Two

Grading Rubric: Annotated Bibliography

For this assessment you will choose your own topic of current research relevant to understanding human nature. You may choose a topic covered in lectures, although you may want to zoom in on a particular aspect. You may also identify other topics that interest you but are not covered in lectures. If you choose outside the range of lecture topics, please secure the approval of the instructor.

The annotated bibliography requires that you select 4 – 6 papers on your topic. They must be from the peer-reviewed literature. To find sources, use Google Scholar (found by googling) and/or Web of Science (found in the library's list of databases). You are to summarise and critically evaluate your chosen papers. The description and evaluation of each paper will be between 200 and 400 words long. An example of how to proceed with this assignment will be worked through in class so you can see both a useful method to employ and have an example of an appropriate 'product'.

Note: the distinction between an annotation and an abstract. Abstracts are descriptive summaries and you will find examples of these at the beginning of nearly every peer reviewed journal article. This kind of description *is not* what is being asked of you. Annotations are *evaluations* of sources. They must also include a description of the work, but crucially include a critique and explanation of the strengths and weaknesses of the article.

Your annotated bibliography will be graded according to the following:

Appropriately Chosen Sources: 20%

1. Appropriate sources
2. Largely appropriate sources
3. Largely inappropriate sources
4. Completely inappropriate sources

Citation Format: 10%

1. Correct, complete citations
2. Mostly correct, mostly complete citations
3. Mostly incorrect, mostly incomplete citations
4. Absent or completely uninformative citations

Summary: 30%

1. Clear, concise and complete summary
2. Incomplete but largely clear and concise summary
3. Incomplete, unclear or inaccurate summary
4. Absent or uninformative summary

Synthesis and Critique: 30%

1. Comprehensive synthesis and critique making explicit connections to other papers or arguments
2. Somewhat comprehensive synthesis and critique that makes vague connections to other papers or arguments
3. Failure to either synthesize or critique
4. Failure to both synthesize and critique

Language: 10%

1. Grammatically sound, clear and well-written
2. Grammatically flawed, misspellings and typos
3. Incomplete sentences