

# Psychological Anthropology (Revised)

## Anthropology 260

### Fall 2002

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**Meeting Time: MWF 10:40- 11:30am**

**Office Hours: MW 2:10 to 3:10pm, or by appointment.**

#### **Course Description**

Psychological anthropology is a rapidly expanding subfield of anthropology that seeks to simultaneously understand how reliably developing (pan human) aspects of human minds influence the transmission and dynamics of culture, thought and behavior, and how, in turn, cultural patterns and environment shape minds, emotions and cognitive processes. This course will emphasize recent theoretical approaches that allow us to transcend debates such as “nature vs. nurture” and “human universals” to examine human minds as joint products of three interactive processes: genetic evolution, cultural evolution (history) and ontogeny (development and learning).

#### **Organizing Questions in this Course?**

- 1) What are the evolutionary foundations of human psychology and culture? How and why are humans so different from non-human animals?
- 2) Can human psychology be understood apart from culture? And, can culture be understood without reference to human biology and evolution?
- 3) How do individuals learn culture? What is learned, how is it learned, and from whom?
- 4) What are the implications—for understanding such things as child rearing, violence, ethnicity, religion, social change and economic development—of a cultural-psychological approach to human behavior?

#### **Course Materials and Resources:**

**Blackboard** (<http://classes.emory.edu>) contains all of the non-book readings for the course. These readings will be under either “Course Documents” or “External Links” (the green buttons). I will also post messages, updates and the ‘reading questions’ (described below) as the course goes along. We will also put up discussion boards on various topics as needed. You should try to check our class blackboard site at least twice a week.

#### Books to buy

- *On the Cultural Origins of Human Cognition* by Michael Tomasello
- *The Development of Cognitive Anthropology* by Roy D’Andrade
- *Culture in Mind* by Bradd Shore
- *Culture of Honor* by Richard Nisbett & Dov Cohen

Posted Readings (on the Course Website)

- 1) Cosmides & Tooby (1998) *Evolutionary Psychology: A Primer* (see link from Blackboard)
- 2) Sperber, Dan (1994) The Modularity of thought and the epidemiology of representations. In *Mapping the Mind*, edited by L. Hirschfeld and S. Gelman. Cambridge University Press.
- 3) Richerson, Peter and Robert Boyd (forthcoming) *The Origin of Cultures*.
- 4) Boesch, Christophe and Michael Tomasello (1998) Chimpanzee and Human Cultures. *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 39(5): 591-614.
- 5) Gil-White, Francisco (2001) Are ethnic groups biological species to the human brain? *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 42(4): 515-554
- 6) Boyer, Pascal (1994) Cognitive constraints on cultural representations: Natural ontologies and religious ideas. In *Mapping the Mind*, edited by L. Hirschfeld and S. Gelman. Cambridge University Press.
- 7) Harris, Judith Rich (1995) Where is the Child's Environment? A Group Socialization Theory of Development. *Psychological Review*, Vol. 102(3):458-489.
- 8) Henrich, Joseph & Gil-White, Francisco (2001) The Evolution of Prestige: freely conferred deference as a mechanism for enhancing the benefits of cultural transmission. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 22 (3): 165-196.
- 9) Fiske, Alan. The Four Elementary Forms of Sociality: Framework for a Unified Theory of Social Relations. *Psychological Review*, 99, 689-723, 1992.
- 10) Ekman, Paul (1999) Basic Emotions. In *Handbook of Cognition and Emotion*. T. Dalgleish and M. Power (eds.). John Wiley & Sons Ltd., Sussex, U.K.
- 11) Levy, Robert (1973) *Tahitians: Mind and Experience in the Society Islands*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago. Chapter 1, 8 and 9 are posted.

**Course Requirements and weightings for grade:**

This course has 2 mid-course exams, one final exam and an extra credit research paper. The relative weight in grading breaks down as follows:

Grading Instrument	Percentage contribution
Mid-course Exam 1	25%
Mid-course Exam 2	35%
Final Exam	40%

*Mid-course Exams:* These two 50 minute in-class examinations are meant to test your general mastery of the course material, as well as your ability to integrate and apply it. There will be some multiple-choice questions, although most of the test will be short answer style. These exams will be non-cumulative, and will cover only material since the beginning of the course, or the previous exam.

*Final Exam:* The Final will differ from the Mid-course exams in two ways. First, 20% of the exam grade (that's 8% of the course grade) will be based on answering four long essay questions that will be given out in the class just prior to the exam, and turned in *before* the start of the in-class exam. Second, the Final is cumulative—everything is fair game. Otherwise, the structure of the in-class portion will mirror the two prior exams.

*Occasional brief homework assignments:* These will be assigned to the class “as needed”—i.e., if I perceive that people are not keeping up the reading, or are getting stuck on specific points, terms or concepts. They will be graded ‘complete’ or ‘incomplete’. Incompletes will result in deductions from the student’s final percentage score.

*Extra Credit Research Paper:* Students may write a research paper on any approved topic after consultation with the instructor. Interested students must discuss this option with the instructor before proceeding. All topics must be approved before class #33, and paper must be turned in by 5pm on the day of the Final Exam. Depending on quality and effort, student may receive between 0 and 15% added to their final grade.

## **Schedule**

Class 1: Introduction, Discussion of Syllabus, Questionnaire, etc.

Class 2: Culture and Psychology---some curious evidence. Culture affects fundamental perceptive and cognitive abilities.

## **I. The Evolutionary Foundations of Cultural Capacities and Cognitive Structure**

Class 3: Evolutionary Foundations of Psychology: Innateness Approaches

*Readings:* Cosmides & Tooby (Evolutionary Psychology: A Primer)  
<http://www.psych.ucsb.edu/research/cep/primer.html>

*Questions:* What is the problem with distinguishing “instinct” from “reason”? What is the problem with distinguishing “emotion” or “feeling” from “reason”? What is the standard social science model? What is a module? Why isn’t “generalized learning” a sensible approach to human cognition and behavior?

Class 4: The Epidemiology of Representations

*Readings:* Sperber (p. 39-67) from *Mapping the Mind* (Class Website)

### *Culture-Gene Evolutionary Foundations of Psychology*

Class 5: Innateness is not enough: Culture is real and important

*Readings:* Richerson and Boyd (Chapters 1 & 2 on Class Website)

Class 6: Culture is real and important, continued

*Readings:* Richerson and Boyd (Chapter 3 on Class Website)

*Optional Readings:* Richerson and Boyd (Chapters 4 & 5 on Class Website)

Class 7: Culture-Gene Evolutionary Foundations of Psychology:

*Readings:* Tomasello (p.1-55)

Class 8: Theory of Mind, joint attention and cultural learning

*Reading:* Tomasello (p. 56-93)

Class 9: Cognition and Culture in Non-Human Primates: Do non-humans primates have culture?

*Readings:* Boesch & Tomasello (Class Website)

Class 10: Summary and Synthesis on Evolutionary Foundations of Psychology and Culture

*Readings:* None

## **II. Applications of Evolutionary Theory to Understanding Cognition**

Class 11-12: Evolutionary theory meets Cognitive Anthropology: Folkbiology and Colors

*Readings:* D'Andrade (p. 92-115), but read ahead, as the Gil-White piece is long.

Class 13: Do people use folkbiology to approach human ethnic differences: The new concept of "folkethnicity". Are ethnic groups "species" to the human brain?

*Readings:* Gil-White (Class Website)—you don't have to read the commentaries.

Class 14: Ghosts, gods, superheroes, aliens and other mythic creatures: The evolved universal structure of religious thought.

*Readings:* Boyer (p. 391-411) from *Mapping the Mind* (Class Website)

Class 15-16: Culture is both adaptive and maladaptive, and General Discussion and Review

*Readings:* Richerson and Boyd, Chapter 4 and 5.

Class 17: Exam I

## **III. Cultural Acquisition: What's Acquired? How? From Whom? And, When?**

Classes 18-19: Mental Representations, Mental Models and Culture

*Readings:* D'Andrade (122-181) and Shore (p.42-71)

Oct 18 and 21 (Class 20-21): Language and the Mind: The evolutionary and cultural foundations of language.

*Reading:* Tomasello (p. 94-200)

Oct 23 and 25 (Classes 22 – 23): Cultural learning, but from whom?

*Reading:* Harris, Judith Rich (<http://www.apa.org/journals/rev/rev1023458.html>), but also look at <http://home.att.net/~xchar/tna/>)

Oct 28: Evolved Mechanisms for Cultural Learning: Prestige and Conformity

*Readings:* Henrich & Gil-White (Class Website)

Oct 30 and Nov 1 Cultural learning, mental models, modes of transmission and consensus.

*Reading:* Shore (p. 207-261) and D'Andrade (p. 182-217)

#### **IV. Historical Interlude: The Development of Psychology Anthropology**

Nov 4 (Class 27): History of Cognitive Anthropology

*Readings:* D'Andrade (p. 1-57)

Nov 6 (Class 28): History of Cognitive Anthropology continued

*Reading:* D'Andrade (p. 58-90)

Nov 8 (Class 29): Psychological Anthropology and Psychic Unity Muddle

*Readings:* Shore (p. 3-41)

Nov 11 (Class 30): Cultural Models and Cognitive Conflict

*Readings:* Shore (p. 265-306)

Nov 13: Discussion and Review

*Readings:* none

Nov 15 (Class 32): Exam II

## V. Integrations and applications of a culture-psychology approach

Nov 18 and 20: Emotions, Feelings, Culture and Evolution: What's universal and what varies across cultures and individuals? Do people in different societies "feel" differently? Do all societies have the emotion we call "guilt"?

Readings: Ekman (on Blackboard)

Optional (read a classic ethnography of Tahitian life): Levy Chapters (Class Website: RR)

**NOTE, November 18 is the deadline for chatting with me about the optional term paper.**

Nov 22: Cultures in Mind: What is the origin of "meaning"? How do experiences come to "mean" something?

*Readings:* Shore (p. 311-340)

Nov 25 (Class 38): Cross-cultural Research on Economic Behavior: Economic decisions are often thought of as a behavioral domain that is not heavily influenced by "culture"—unlike domains such as religion or music. Is this true?

Reading: None

Nov 27: Read Nisbett and Cohen so you can have the entire book finished by Dec 2, and do the assignment. No class, Happy Thanksgiving!!

Dec 2 and 4 (Class 33 thru 34): Culture of Honor

*Reading:* Nisbett & Cohen (whole book)

*Assignment:* write 1 paragraph summarizing the main thesis of the book. Write a number of other paragraphs summarizing the main lines of evidence that the authors use to support their argument. **Max 2 pages**, doubled-space, Times-New Roman or Arial, font 10-12.

Dec 6: Cognitive Models of Human Social Relationships: How do humans learn about new relationships? Are there universal patterns in human relationships that emerge in different ways in different societies?

*Readings:* Fiske (<http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/anthro/faculty/fiske/reimodov.htm>): RR

Dec 9 (Class 41): From evolution and psychology to sociology and history: How do micro-level analyses of cultural learning help to explain macro-level patterns such as large-scale cooperation, economic specialization, ethnicity and "cultures".

Reading: Tomasello (p.201-217), D'Andrade (p. 218-252)

Dec 11 (Class 42): Conclusions, Review and Discussion

Final Exam