

*Psychology 407*  
**Culture and Cognition**

**Meeting Time:** Tuesdays 5pm to 7:30pm

**Meeting Place:** Buchanan D222

**Instructor: Joe Henrich**

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Office Hours: Thurs: 1-2 or by appointment.

**Description**

This course introduces the emerging evolutionary approach to understanding human behavior and psychology that approaches humans as a cultural species. The emphasis here is on understanding both the broad range of psychological diversity created by culture, and cultural evolution, as well as on how culture is learned, represented, and transmitted. In assessing the importance of culture, we will also consider how it has shaped, and continues to shape, the human genome and genetic contributions to behavior and psychology.

Because this is a 400 level course and a seminar, our goal is to enter the primary literature and begin reading the journal articles and chapters that are driving current debates in the field. Classes will be primarily focused on (1) clarifying the readings, often by answering students' questions, and (2) engaging, debating and discussing the material, both with the entire class and within groups. Evaluations will be based on writing, speaking, and participation, including a heavy dose of group work. There will be no multiple-choice tests.

This course aims to be a seminar. However, due to the large size of the class (for a seminar), we will frequently break into smaller groups to discuss various topics. The groups will be set on the first day, and will *remain stable* through the course. These groups will report to the class frequently, and even debate other groups at times. Meeting as a group outside of class will be necessary during some weeks. At the end of the course, each member of each group will fill out a report on the participation and contributions of all fellow group members (see below).

**Course Resources**

*Vista System:* This course will rely heavily on the delivery of readings in the form of PDFs and weblinks via UBC's Vista system. When you log into Vista you'll find one folder for each week (class). The readings for that week are in the folder (you need to

read those before class). A few readings that are marked as “optional” are optional readings.

Also on that first entry screen for Vista you will find a folder marked “Lectures”. There we will put Powerpoint lectures in PDF. Since lectures are meant to stimulate questions, discussions and active engagement based on thinking about and extending the readings (which you’ve already done), under no circumstance will PDFs of lectures be provided *ahead of time*. They will be posted the day after the lecture. Posting before the class turns too many students into copy-memorize-and-regurgitate zombies.

Vista will also be used for (1) providing students access to their mid-term examination grades, (2) making announcements between classes, (3) submission of final examinations, and (4) delivering updated versions of the syllabus. There are also online discussion opportunities on Vista.

The course will make some use of film and video. In particular, *The Human Spark*.  
<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/humanspark/>

## Background

Students will be required to have some familiarity with evolutionary or “adaptationist” thinking. If you had my Psych 354 course, you should be fine. If you aren’t sure if you have the background, please read the first 66 pages of David Sloan Wilson’s *Evolution is for Everyone*.

## Course requirements and weightings for final grade

Your grade will be based on five components (Table 1).

### *Class Participation and Attendance*

If you attend all of the classes you will get 4 of the 10% available here. During each class the TA and I will take note of who is actively engaged, asking questions, and making contributions. If you never say anything, you will get zero for this component. Thus, if you always attend but never speak, you will get 4 of the 10%. If you are actively engaged and participating in most classes, you can easily get the full 10%.

#	Grading Instrument	%
1	Class Participation	10
2	Group Participation	20
3	Group Assignments	20
4	In-class Mid-term	20
5	Take Home Final Exam	30

### *Group Participation*

Most classes will have a group component, and each group will often need to meet outside of class to prepare a brief in-class presentation. At the end of the class, each group member will evaluate all other group members on their participation and contributions, including their work on the Group Assignments (see below). This material will be used by me to assign grades for this group participation component.

### *Group Assignments*

The class will be divided into roughly 6 work groups, labeled 1 to 6. Groups will be evaluated in two ways: (1) 5% for general contributions to class discussions on topics assigned during class and (2) 15% for *three* prepared presentations. The prepared presentations will involve a 5-15 minute presentation on a topic (15 minutes should be seen as the absolute maximum). Your group will make three of these presentations over the course of the semester. They will be graded by the TA and me. Each presentation is worth 5% of your grade, but your whole group gets the same grade. If people make different levels of contributions here, this will likely reveal itself in the evaluations of group participation.

### *Mid-term Exam*

This will be an in-class examination involving essay and short-answer questions. It will focus on the important ideas from the readings and class lectures.

### *Final Exam*

This will be a take-home examination that is due on Vista by Dec 9<sup>th</sup> at 5pm. The examination is “open everything.” You can even discuss answers with your classmates. HOWEVER, you must write your answer in your own words and by yourself. No materials can be copied from anywhere, including from pals, books, articles or the internet. The questions will be very difficult thought questions, so you won’t be able to “look up” the answers anywhere. Note that we will run each paper through specialized software that detects copied material, both from other class papers and from the internet.

### **This course will be challenging**

Our goal in this course is to begin to push you to the next intellectual level. This means you need to be able to read and understand the primary literature. Many of the readings will be hard, drawing from current work from the top journals. Our job (your instructor and TA) is to scaffold you along this process by explaining and clarifying things in class. Many of the harder readings in this course are group readings, which means that you should tap the collective brain of your group to work collaboratively to figure out what the article is saying. Your group will need to meet outside of class.

The examination questions will test your understanding and mastery of substantial theoretical enterprises. They will be hard. Memorizing facts for a multiple choice tests will get you nowhere in this course.

You will need to engage the material by speaking up in class, and in your groups. Thirty percent of your grade comes from speaking during class. (Obviously, not showing up for class will make speaking up during class difficult)

If you are looking for an easy slide to graduation, this course is not for you. If you want a challenging, engaging, intellectual odyssey into fundamental questions about human psychology, culture, and evolution, this class could be for you.

## Schedule

1	Sept 7	<p><b>Introduction</b> and review of course goals, grading, and policies Assignment of groups.</p> <p><u>Anticipatory Discussion</u> In what ways is our (meaning, psychology's) database of psychological experiments biased? Who is overrepresented? Could this influence our understanding of the human mind? In what ways, specifically? Are there some aspects of human psychology that we expect to be more or less variable among populations? What principles might delineate these categories? Is this sufficiently taken into account during your education in psychology?</p> <p>Review of Course Schedule</p> <p><i>Optional Reading</i> for those with insufficient background on evolution: Wilson pages 1-70</p>
2	Sept 14	<p><b>What do we really know about <i>human</i> psychology?</b></p> <p><i>Reading:</i> Henrich et. al. [1] pages 1 to 23 and Deutscher (NYtimes) <i>Optional Reading:</i> Henrich et. al. pages 24 to 75</p> <p><u>Reports on commentaries and Replies (by HH&amp;N)</u> Group 1: Astuti and Bloch, Baumard and Sperber, Rai and Fiske Group 2: Chiao and Cheon, Fernald, Karasik et. al., Lancy, Majid and Levinson, Stich. Group 3: Rozin, Danks, et. al.</p> <p><u>Anticipatory Discussion</u> What is the cause of all this variation? How can we build a theory to account for it? What is culture, anyway, and how does it get into people's heads? Does cultural affect our biology?</p>
3	Sept 21	<p><b>How can we build a theory of culture? What is Dual Inheritance Theory?</b></p> <p><i>Reading:</i> Henrich and McElreath [2] and Mameli</p> <p>Group 4 Reading: Plotkin</p> <p><u>Anticipatory Discussion</u> How might cultural influence human status, compared to animals without cultural learning? Are there kinds of human status? Are you afraid of high status individuals or do you want to hang around them?</p>

4	Sept 28	<p><b>The Evolution of Prestige: Do humans have more than one kind of social status, and how is it linked to cultural learning?</b></p> <p><i>Reading:</i> Henrich and Gil-White [3] and Cheng et. al. [4]</p> <p>Guest Lecturer: Joey Cheng</p> <p><u>Anticipatory Task</u> Design some experiments to test the ideas presented today in young children.</p>
5	Oct 5	<p><b>Cultural learning in Children</b></p> <p><i>Reading:</i> Chudek et. al. [5] and Harris &amp; Corriveau (forthcoming)</p> <p>Group Reading 5: Stenberg Group Reading 6: Kinzler et. al.</p> <p><u>Anticipatory Discussion</u> How can culture be maladaptive? Can population size or interconnectedness influence cultural evolution? Why are some aspects of culture better transmitted than other aspects?</p>
6	Oct 12	<p><b>Cultural evolution and content bias:</b> Is cultural evolution adaptive? How do reliably developing features of our mind influence cultural transmission?</p> <p><i>Reading:</i> Henrich and Henrich [6] and Henrich [7]</p> <p>Group 1 Reading: Barrett and Broesch</p> <p><u>Anticipatory Discussions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What makes us human? What’s special about humans compared to other species?</li> <li>• If culture is an evolutionary system, could it impact genetic evolution? If what ways do you think it might have most impacted genetic evolution? Could human groups today with different cultures have different genes?</li> </ul>
7	Oct 19	<p><b>Human Uniqueness: Do non-human species have culture?</b></p> <p><i>Reading:</i> Whiten (Chimpanzees Culture)</p> <p>Group 2: Laland et. al. (Fish Culture)</p>

		Film: <i>The Human Spark</i>
8	Oct 26	<p><b>In-class Mid-term</b></p> <p><b>Culture-gene coevolution</b></p> <p>Reading: Wade (NYtimes) and Laland et. al. [8]</p> <p><u>Anticipatory Discussion</u> How important is teaching for human cultural transmission? Might this vary across human societies?</p>
9	Nov 2	<p><b>How important is teaching and pedagogy in cultural transmission? Are we innate teachers?</b></p> <p>Reading: Lancy (n.d.) and Gergeley [9]</p> <p>Kit Brown-Watts: Hoppit et. al. [10]</p> <p><u>Anticipatory Discussion</u> Why are human brains so much bigger than those of other species? What kind of evolutionary process might be responsible for this? What are our big brains for? What are we good at relative to other species? Are we better at solving physical problem, memory, spatial cognition, ...what?</p>
10	Nov 9	<p><b>The Cultural Brain Hypothesis.</b> What are the origins of our big brains and fancy cognition? Could cultural evolution itself have been the driver?</p> <p>Guest Lecturer: Myriam Juda</p> <p>Reading: (1) Introduction, (2) Herrmann et. al. and (3) van Schaik &amp; Burkart.</p> <p>Group 4: Dunbar Group 5: Firth Group 6: Connor</p> <p><u>Anticipatory Discussion</u> Suppose people can culturally learn to punish other people, or to not interact with them based on a rule? Does that happen? What does this mean for cultural evolution?</p>
11	Nov 16	<p><b>Cooperation and Social Norms</b></p> <p><i>Reading:</i> Chudek et. al. [11] and TBA</p>

		<p>Guest Lecturer: Maciek Chudek</p> <p><u>Anticipatory Discussion</u>  Why do people have religions? Are religions pretty similar? If so, in what ways? How are they different? Do religions make people more prosocial? If so, how might that work?</p>
12	Nov 23	<p><b>Religion</b></p> <p><i>Reading:</i> TBA</p> <p>Guest lecturer: TA Aiyana Willard</p>
13	Nov 30	<p><b>The Mystery of Monogamy (report)</b></p> <p>Debate: Should polygamy be legalized? Why or Why Not?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Groups 1 and 2 must argue for some form of legalization</li> <li>• Groups 4, 5 and 6 must argue against legalizing at least some forms of polygyny</li> </ul> <p>Each group will be 10 minutes to make their case. Nuanced positions are welcome. Outside research will impress the evaluators/ graders</p> <p><b>Take-home Final Assigned in class, due Dec 9.</b></p>

### **Psychology Department's Position on Academic Misconduct**

Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic misconduct are very serious concerns of the University, and the Department of Psychology has taken steps to alleviate them. In the first place, the Department has implemented software that, can reliably detect cheating on multiple-choice exams by analyzing the patterns of students' responses. In addition, the Department subscribes to *TurnItIn*--a service designed to detect and deter plagiarism. All materials (term papers, lab reports, etc.) that students submit for grading will be scanned and compared to over 5 billion pages of content located on the Internet or in TurnItIn's own proprietary databases. The results of these comparisons are compiled into customized "Originality Reports" containing several, sensitive measures of plagiarism; instructors receive copies of these reports for every student in their class.

In all cases of suspected academic misconduct, the parties involved will be pursued to the fullest extent dictated by the guidelines of the University. Strong evidence of cheating or plagiarism may result in a zero credit for the work in question. According to the University Act (section 61), the President of UBC has the right to impose harsher

penalties including (but not limited to) a failing grade for the course, suspension from the University, cancellation of scholarships, or a notation added to a student's transcript. All graded work in this course, unless otherwise specified, is to be original work done independently by individuals. Do **not** use Google/Yahoo/MSN Search/etc. to find articles for assignments in this course. **Do** use any of the indexes and databases listed under Indexes and Databases, Subject Resources, OneSearch or Metasearch on the Library's website at <http://www.library.ubc.ca>. (Not sure which index to use? Click HELP on the library homepage at [www.library.ubc.ca](http://www.library.ubc.ca) or try Subject Resources.) If you have any questions as to whether or not what you are doing is even a borderline case of academic misconduct, please consult your instructor. For details on pertinent University policies and procedures, please see Chapter 5 in the UBC Calendar (<http://students.ubc.ca/calendar>).

1. Henrich J., Heine S. J., Norenzayan A. 2010 The Weirdest People in the World? *Behavior and Brain Sciences* **33**(2/3), 1-23.
2. Henrich J., McElreath R. 2007 Dual Inheritance Theory: The Evolution of Human Cultural Capacities and Cultural Evolution. In *Oxford Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology* (ed. R. Dunbar, Barrett L.), pp. 555-70. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
3. Henrich J., Gil-White F. 2001 The Evolution of Prestige: freely conferred deference as a mechanism for enhancing the benefits of cultural transmission. *Evolution and Human Behavior* **22**(3), 165-96.
4. Cheng J. T., Tracy J. L., Henrich J. forthcoming Pride, Personality, and the Evolutionary Foundations of Human Social Status. *Evolution and Human Behavior*.
5. Chudek M., Heller S., Birch S., Henrich J. Prestige-Bias: Developmental Evidence for Biased Cultural Learning. Vancouver, n.d.
6. Henrich J., Henrich N. 2010 The Evolution of Cultural Adaptations: Fijian taboos during pregnancy and lactation protect against marine toxins. *Proceedings of the Royal Society B-Biological Sciences*  
<http://rspb.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/early/2010/07/26/rspb.2010.1191.short?rss=1>.
7. Henrich J. 2009 The Evolution of Innovation-Enhancing Institutions. In *Innovation in Cultural Systems: Contributions in Evolution Anthropology* (ed. S. J. Shennan, O'Brien M. J.), Cambridge: MIT.
8. Laland K. N., Odling-Smee J., Myles S. 2010 How culture shaped the human genome: bringing genetics and the human sciences together. *Nature Reviews Genetics* **11**(2), 137-48.
9. Csibra G., Gergely G. 2009 Natural pedagogy. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* **13**(4), 148-53.
10. Hoppitt W. J. E., Brown G. R., Kendal R., Rendell L., Thornton A., Webster M. M., Laland K. N. 2008 Lessons from animal teaching. *Trends in Ecology & Evolution* **23**(9), 486-93.
11. Chudek M., Zhao W., Henrich J. Culture-Gene Coevolution, Large-Scale Cooperation and the Shaping of Human Social Psychology. n.d.