

ASEM 2420  
**The Cultured Ape**  
Winter 2020

**Assignment #1: The 2% Difference**

It is a well-known fact that human beings and chimpanzees share about 98% of their DNA in common. The articles by **Jared Diamond**, **Jonathan Marks**, and **Robert Sapolsky** (posted to the Course Portfolio site) allow us to consider how the study of comparative genetics relates to the suggestion that *Homo sapiens* is usefully seen as a Cultured Ape. The article by **Christophe Boesch**, with its comparison of human and chimp “cultures”, is relevant to this issue, and **Craig Stanford**’s article also provides useful background.

Read these five articles and write a critical essay that answers the following questions:

1. What specific position do Diamond, Marks, and Sapolsky each take on the 2% genetic difference? For whom is the fact most significant, and for whom is it least significant?
2. To what extent can the genetic comparison be used to confirm the suggestion that humans are Cultured Apes? What difference does Boesch’s analysis of chimpanzee behavior make to your consideration of this question?
3. *How much should we care* about the documented 2% genetic difference (or, 98% genetic similarity) as well as the documented cultural similarities/differences between humans and chimpanzees? What larger considerations (e.g., of the sort raised by **Ferris Jabr** in his article) are relevant to the question of how much we should care?

**Expected length is 5-6 double-spaced pages with 1 inch margins all around. Your essay should be typed using a 12 point font. Please number your manuscript pages!!**

**This assignment is DUE IN CLASS on Tuesday, January 21. We will consider the questions asked above in a group discussion.**