

ASEM 2420  
**The Cultured Ape**  
Winter 2020

**Assignment #2: Evolutionary Science and Biophobia**

As we briefly discussed in Week 1, concepts of human nature that allow a biological basis for human cultural behavior are controversial. For many scholars and citizens they conjure fears of determinism, imperfectability, inequality, and nihilism. They also threaten human exceptionalism. For other scholars and citizens, clarifying the relationship between human biology and cultural behavior is the next great frontier of understanding, offering a better way for humans to know ourselves, and what it means to be human.

The articles by Wilson, Freese, McCaughey, and de Waal speak to the controversy and the debate about the biological basis of human behavior. After reading this work, write an essay that:

1. Describes how each author contributes to the human nature debate/conversation. What are the most essential points made by each author?
2. Establishes your own position on the issues raised by the readings. Is seeking a unified or “consilient” understanding of human nature important? How much do we have to fear by bringing evolutionary biology/psychology/anthropology into the mix? Given the usual fears, what do we need to be careful of? What author(s) are especially instrumental in shaping your position?

Feel free to bring into your essay authors and/or arguments you have read in your own disciplinary work. Reference them using the bibliographic style with which you are most familiar.

**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 Friday, January 31. We will consider the questions asked above in a group discussion.**