**ASEM 2420**  
**Spring 2016**  

**THE CULTURED APE**

**MW 2:00-3:50 P.M.**  
**Sturm Hall 154**

**Instructor**  
Prof. Dean Saitta  
Office Hours: TH 12:00-1:00; also by appointment  
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**Course Description and Objectives**

For all of the human species’ evolutionary success and Space Age technological prowess we are in many ways still Stone Age people with minds, behavior patterns, and existential anxieties that aren’t that different from those of our distant human ancestors. The course will ask you to reflect a bit on change and continuity in human evolutionary history, and the potentially lethal tension that the two have created.

The course emerges from an interdisciplinary encounter between anthropology, psychology, evolutionary biology, and environmental science. “Evolutionary Psychology” is a rapidly developing field of inquiry that sits on the boundary between, and draws inspiration from, each of these disciplines. The famous biologist E.O. Wilson, in his book *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge*, has described such fields as “borderland” and “hybrid” disciplines. Evolutionary Psychology deals with how contemporary human behavior is constrained by our heritage as evolved primates. It questions the standard social science and mainstream anthropological model of humans as “blank slates” who are primarily shaped by their social and cultural environments. In other words, Evolutionary Psychology views humans as “cultured apes.”

The course will challenge you to take seriously our bio-psychological heritage as evolved apes. It will engage what Steven Pinker describes as the “hot button” issues of our time—including war, inter-personal violence, gender inequality, gay marriage, religious belief, and others—from an evolutionary perspective. We will explore how public policies relevant to the hot button issues of our time might be better developed from a position that is sensitive to humankind’s status as an evolved species, a position that might be termed an “Evolutionary Pragmatics” that is also heavily informed by an Evolutionary Anthropology. Thus, the course not only draws on the interdisciplinary encounter noted above, but also extends discussion in a way that invades the territory of sociology, political science, economics, ethical philosophy, women’s studies, and a number of other disciplines within the social sciences and humanities.
Course Requirements
You will be graded on:
(1) Class attendance, preparedness, and participation, including completion of unannounced pop quizzes or “Freewrites” (20%).
(2) Three Take-Home Writing Assignments:
   a. Assignment #1 (15%)
   b. Assignment #2 (15%)
   c. Research Paper Prospectus (20%)
(3) Final Research Paper (30%).

You are required to have all reading finished for the days assigned. You should come to class thoroughly prepared to discuss this material. You should be prepared to take pop quizzes on the reading and/or complete some other in-class assignments (“Freewrites”).

Required Texts:

This text will be supplemented with additional readings from the scientific and popular literature. These readings are available on the DU Portfolio Community site found at http://portfolio.du.edu/culturedape/page/58461. I reserve the right to add, delete, or substitute readings as we move through the quarter. I’ll be posting other course material on this page, all including all course handouts, assignments, and slide presentations.

COURSE SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mar 21</td>
<td>What’s the Point of this Course? Alternative Visions of Human Nature. Distribute Assignment #1.</td>
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<td>Mar 23</td>
<td>Overview of Human Evolutionary History.</td>
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| 2    | Mar 28| Meeting the Ancestors; Deconstructing Wilson. Readings:  
|      |       | • Pinker, chapters 1 and 2.  
|      | Mar 30| Unresolved Issues, Debates, and Research Challenges in the Study of Human Evolution. Readings:  
|      | April 6| Primate Socioecology                                                                                                                 |
April 11

**Chimpanzee Biology and “Culture”**.

**Reading:**

**Rewrite of Assignment #1 is Due.**

April 13

**What Does It Mean to be 98% Chimpanzee?**

**Reading:**

**Assignment #2 is due.**

April 18

**Biophobias: What’s to Fear from an Evolutionary View of Humankind?**

**Reading:**
- Pinker, chapters 6-11.

April 20

**Loose Ends; Summary of Major Themes.**

April 25

**NO CLASS.**

April 27

**How Different Are Men and Women?**

**Reading:**
- Pinker, chapter 18;

**Rewrite of Assignment #2 is Due.**

May 2

**Are Humans Built for Monogamy?**

**Reading:**

May 4

**Is Homosexuality Adaptive?**

**Reading:**

May 9

**Are Women the Superior Sex? Should Women Go to War?**

**Reading:**
May 11  
**Could Rape be an Evolved Behavior?**  
**Reading:**  

**Research Paper Prospectus is Due.**

9 May 16  
**Are Republicans and Democrats Born or Made?**  
**Reading:**  
- Pinker, chapter 16.  

May 18  
**Is the Cultured Ape Naturally Violent?**  
**Reading:**  
- Pinker, chapter 17.  

10 May 23  
**Is the Cultured Ape Naturally Moral?**  
**Reading:**  
- Pinker, Chapter 15.  

May 25  
**Evolution and Public Policy: Toward an Evolutionary Pragmatics.**  
**Reading:**  

May 27  
**Final Research Paper Is Due.**