

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

University of Denver
Enrichment Program
Spring 2005

Human Origins and Evolution: The Clash of Biology and Culture?

Instructor	Prof. Dean Saitta, Anthropology	E-mail	dsaitta@du.edu
Phone	303.871.2680	Course Times	Thursdays May 5, 12, 19, and 26, 7-9 pm.
Location	Sturm Hall 154	Office	Sturm Hall 105

Course Description:

The archaeological and biological evidence for the origin and evolution of *Homo sapiens* is accumulating at a rapid rate. Although controversies about the general picture is now clear. From the heart of Africa, *Homo sapiens* spread across the continents while earlier, more primitive kinds of humans (including Neanderthals) were still alive. The course opens with that evolutionary story, but just as interesting and of greater contemporary relevance is the evolution of human culture. What are the relationships between biology and culture in human history? What were the “original” forms of human sexual relations, family life, and politics? Are contemporary human behaviors in harmony or in conflict with our evolved biological and psychological natures? Is the monogamous, heterosexual pair bond necessary and natural, with everything else an “abomination”? Are men destined to be better than women in politics, science, and other walks of life? Do human races really exist, and are tendencies to racism part of our nature? Are humans naturally prone to xenophobia and warfare? Is religious belief “in our genes”? This course stretches our self-concept—as a species!

Goals or take away(s): A better understanding of human evolutionary history and its contemporary relevance, especially for public policy issues around marriage, sexuality, “family values”, gender equity, criminality, affirmative action, international relations, and the relationship between church and state.

Requirements: Attendance and active participation in the seminars.

Resources: The seminars will be illustrated with slides, handouts, and the Department of Anthropology’s excellent collection of human fossil cast material.

Text: Several short readings will be distributed in class.

Course Schedule

Week	Topic	Required Reading
1	Introductions; The human evolutionary story; Fossil cast exercise; Iconographies of human evolution.	None
2	What were original humans like? Biology and culture in human evolution; Behavior of early <i>Homo sapiens</i> : Art, Belief, Sex, Drugs, and “Family Values” in the Old Stone Age.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gingrich, “Men Love the Muck”; • Pringle, “New Women of the Ice Age”; • Lewin, “Stone Age Psychedelia”.
3	Human evolutionary psychology: Mating, sexual orientation, and violence. Modern bodies but Stone Age minds?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fisher, “The Nature of Romantic Love”; • Kristof, “Gay At Birth?”; • Thornhill and Palmer, “Why Men Rape”; • Angier, “Is War Our Biological Destiny?”.
4	Retrospect and Prospect; Are humans slaves to their biological heritage? Evolved psychology and public policy; What does it mean to be human?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will, “Disconnected Youth”; • Gould, “Tires to Sandals”; • Wade, “Can It Be? The End of Evolution?”