

BIO A 471: EVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVES OF PARENTING & CHILDCARE

COURSE SYLLABUS

Instructor : Dr. Melanie Martin

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Winter 2019

Location: CDH 105

Wed 11 :30 AM – 2 :20 PM

Webiste: Canvas

COURSE DESCRIPTION & LEARNING OUTCOMES

Babies in some hunter-gatherer populations never crawl and only start walking when they are 18 months old and older. Babies in Western, industrialized populations are encouraged to crawl and walk at much earlier ages. In most populations, babies sleep with their mothers for several years, while in the US, it is expected that they sleep through the night in a crib as early as possible. In some cultures, children under the age of 10 contribute substantially to childcare and household or labor production. In others, early childhood is highly structured by education, training, and other monitored activities. How do all these ways of raising children affect their development?

This course combines evolutionary and cross-cultural perspectives to examine the full range of child rearing practices across time and place, and consider the following questions: Are there any universal patterns of child rearing? Can, or should, evolutionary and cross-cultural perspectives inform modern family practices or institutional policies in the U.S.? Learning outcomes are achieved through:

- Identification of evolutionary, ecological, and cultural/historical factors that contribute to variation in development and parenting at distinct stages of infancy and childhood
- Participating in a group-led class activity inspired by readings on a specified topic
- Conducting a group research project exploring local child-rearing practices

Required readings:

- Small, M. (1999) *Our babies, ourselves*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Additional journal articles and book chapters are posted on the course Canvas website (see Course Bibliography below for complete list of required and recommended readings)

Course requirements:

- 1) Essay: “*Babies*” reaction summary (5%). In a 2-page essay, discuss your observations of universals and cross-cultural variation in infant care practices and development in the documentary “*Babies*”. Discuss how the differences and similarities you observed in the movie compare to the conclusions reached by Werner (1972)
- 2) Class activity (15%): You will work in groups of ~5-6 to lead an activity inspired by lecture readings for one class. The activity can take many forms. You must email a description of your planned activity to me by Monday 5 PM prior to your scheduled presentation
- 3) Reading discussion participation (20%): For weeks 5-6, you must submit reading comments and questions to scheduled Canvas or Perusall discussion (schedule TBD) by Tuesday before class at 5 pm.
- 4) One take home exam (20%). This will cover weeks 1-5, and consist of short essay questions aimed at summarizing foundational aspects of evolutionary perspectives on parenting and childcare.
- 5) Research project and blog post (40% of grade): You will work in groups of five to conduct original research on a specific child-rearing practice of your choosing. Detailed guidelines for the project will be posted and discussed in class. Groups will be selected during the second week of class on the basis of shared interest in topics. Elements of the project should be partitioned out across team members and will be completed in the following phases:
 - a. Research proposal (topic description and overview of methods) DUE 1/23 (10 pts)
 - b. Project work plan & preliminary methods DUE 1/30 (10 pts)
 - c. Pilot research & revised methods DUE 2/13 (15 pts)
 - d. Results & annotated outline of research paper DUE 3/6 (75 pts)
 - e. 1st draft of blog post DUE 3/13 (40 pts)
 - f. Final paper and blog post due 3/20. The blog post will be submitted to the [Anthropology of Children and Youth Interest Group's NEOS online publication](#) (50 pts).

COURSE POLICIES

Communication: you can arrange to meet with me by appointment in my office or via skype/gchat. Practice [professional communication in your correspondence](#): use your uw.edu email address, employ proper salutations (Dr. or Prof. Martin) and sign-offs, don't write in textspeak or emojis, and make sure you are not asking a question that is answered in the syllabus, on Canvas, or with a quick search. I will respond to emails within 48 hours. If you need to urgently communicate with me, please add *urgent* to the subject line.

Technology in the classroom: Use of laptops, tablets, and smart phones during lectures can be overly distracting to you and other students, and ultimately detract from your learning. I ask that you disable notifications and Wi-Fi during lecture unless otherwise directed.

Absences and make-up work: In the event of a serious conflict or emergency, missed reading questions may be turned in late IF (a) you had prior communication and permission from me or (b) you provide appropriate documentation of extenuating circumstances.

Letters of recommendation: I am happy to write a letter of recommendation for you *if* I can confidently write a positive and personal one. Requests for recommendations should be made at least 2 weeks before the due date, and [should include all relevant information](#) (links or forms needed, your CV/resume, brief recap of the course(s) and/or other work you completed with me, your performance, brief description of the position, your qualifications, and any personal or professional details you would like me to include).

HELPFUL RESOURCES

- Contact the [Disability Services Office](#) (206-543-6450 or dso@uw.edu) to request accommodations
- For writing, research, and language services or support, visit the [Anthropology Writing and Research Center](#), the [CLUE Writing Center](#), the [Office of Minority Affairs and Diversity Instructional Center](#), or the [Odegard Writing and Research Center](#)
- [Anne Davis](#) is the UW Anthropology Librarian (adavey@uw.edu or 206-616-1969)
- Contact the [Counseling Center](#) (401 Schmitz Hall, 206-543-1240) for confidential counseling for stress, anxiety, depression and relationship problems. The Counseling Center also offers career counseling, to help you clarify a major or identify career interests.
- Call the Mental Health Clinic at Hall Health (206-583-1551) for same day and next day support and other psychiatric services.
- UW resources for [Emergency food or aid](#)