COMG 699 Evolution and Human Communication
Spring 2016
Monday 3:00-5:30 p.m.
Conference Room

Instructor
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Office hours: Friday 12:30-2:30 or by appointment

Course Description
Communication is a basic biological phenomenon that impacts the fitness of all animal species. To the extent that "nothing in biology makes sense except in the light of evolution," to quote Theodosius Dobzhansky, a recipient of the National Medal of Science, researching human communication will also benefit from the insight of evolutionary biology.

This class introduces important evolutionary theories and models, and surveys state-of-the-art research that is related to human communication. These studies examine the different functions of human communication in different contexts, and bear important theoretical and practical implications. It is thus the overall goal of this class to provide students with an alternative view to the phenomena that they are taught to study from a "social" or "cultural" perspective, and to equip them with useful theoretical and methodological tools that will facilitate their future research endeavor.

Student Learning Outcomes
After successfully completing this class, you should be able to:
1. Identify where evolutionary theories fit in the field of human communication
2. Demonstrate solid knowledge of major evolutionary theories
3. Demonstrate the ability to engage in original research on human communication from an evolutionary perspective
4. Compare and contrast lay understanding with knowledge of human communication grounded in research informed by evolutionary theories
5. Demonstrate the ability to articulate ideas and synthesize research findings in written form

Course Readings
All readings and class materials will be posted to Laulima.

Course Policies
Attendance. Attendance is critical to this class, which is discussion-based. You are expected to be an active contributor. Please contact me ahead of time if you are going to miss a class. You are response for the material covered in your absence.

Late work policy. NO late work or make-up exams will be allowed/accepted unless some extraordinary, documented circumstance arose, which precluded you from submitting the work. Excused absences must be documented (e.g., doctor's notes) and submitted as early as possible.
The instructor should be notified immediately when such circumstances occur, and either an alternative assignment or extension will be provided. If you are participating in a university-affiliated activity, you must make arrangements with the instructor prior to the absence.

**Academic integrity.** Any student caught plagiarizing an assignment, cheating on an exam, or in possession of an unauthorized copy of an exam will be immediately reported to the Head of the Communicology Department and receive a failing grade on the assignment or exam. Plagiarism includes the lack of acknowledgement for another person’s original thoughts or writings, copying of another’s work verbatim without the use of quotation marks and citation of the source, the use of a person or agency in the business of selling term papers, and the submission of a paper written for another class without the permission of both instructors. University of Hawai‘i’s Student Conduct Code covers these and other infractions in greater depth. You are expected to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code, which can be found at http://studentaffairs.manoa.hawaii.edu/policies/conduct_code/.

**E-mail use.** You are responsible for checking your hawaii.edu e-mail account frequently and consistently to remain current with class communications. You are expected to monitor and manage your e-mail storage quota to ensure that their mailboxes are not saturated, and you are able to receive new messages. You are welcome to email me with questions, and I will do my best to reply in a timely manner.

**Grade Appeals Policy.** Any grade in the class is able to be appealed if you believe there is a compelling reason for why you should have received a higher grade. You are responsible for preparing a type-written argument, which may be e-mailed, detailing why they feel a higher grade is deserved. To appeal a grade received on an assignment or exam, you are asked to provide all of the necessary documentation with the written argument (e.g., paper with instructor’s comments, exam question number, etc.). All appeals must be submitted within one week of receiving the grade.

The instructor will review grade appeals and determine whether any points should be granted. If no amicable solution can be met after the first grade appeal, then you may file a secondary grade appeal. For such appeals, an independent instructor will re-grade the assignment and issue a grade. The second grade (whether it is higher or lower than the original) will be recorded and is not able to be appealed.

**Grading**

Course grade = class participation (30%) + weekly responses (30%) + research proposal (40%)

**Class participation.** Class participation has two parts. 1) Every week from Week 3 to 15, each of you will lead the discussion of a paper of your choice or designated to you by me. To do so, you will first present the paper to the class. The presentation should be concise and no more than 10 minutes. After the presentation, you will initiate the discussion by offering three “talking points.” The talking points can be your critique of the paper (finding this theory/study problematic because… What do you think?); or some part of the paper you do not understand (I am not sure what the authors meant by… What do you think?). These talking points should then create a flow of discussion that will involve the entire class. The expectation is that you will be the
expert on the paper that you are responsible for, and should be able to answer questions on it from your classmates and me.

2) When you are not leading the discussion of a paper, you are expected to actively contribute to the discussion by asking questions, making comments, and suggesting research ideas. By doing so, your confusion is resolved, your understanding of the paper deepened, and your ideas sharpened. At the same time, you are helping the classmate that is leading the discussion by making it more engaging. Think how embarrassing it would be when it was your turn to lead a discussion but nobody responded to your talking points—help others if you want to be helped.

**Weekly responses:** Each week (from Week 3 to 14), you will submit a single-spaced half to one page reflection on the readings for next week's class that you are not responsible for. In this one-pager you can write about what you do not understand, disagree, and/or find most interesting. You can discuss how these readings connect with each other. You can also discuss research ideas that you have after reading them. This assignment should be submitted though Laulima Assignment by 5:00 p.m. on Sunday.

Ideally, you will focus on two to three of the papers. Be concise, critical, and creative. There will be 11 responses, and I will count the 10 that receive the highest score toward the final grade.

**Research Proposal.** For the final project of this class, you will write a research proposal on a topic of your choice. The only requirement is that it must be evolutionarily-oriented, meaning the key hypotheses or predictions must be derived from evolutionary theories. To do so, you can exclusively focus on testing a set of evolutionarily-based predictions, or compare predictions from evolutionary theories and traditional social scientific theories.

The proposal must have 1) a cover page, 2) an abstract (≤150 words), and 3) an introduction section that describes the motivation and purpose of your proposed study, reviews relevant literature, and states the hypotheses that you are going to test, and finally 4) a method section. The paper should be no more than 15 double-spaced pages, excluding the title page, abstract, and references. Follow the APA type (6th edition), and submit by mid-night of May 9th.

To facilitate the writing process, you are required to meet with me before the spring recess to discuss your ideas. Drop by during my office hours or schedule an appointment with me. Secondly, you are required to submit an outline of your paper by Friday 5 p.m., Week 12. The outline will not be graded but I will provide feedback.

Lastly, in the last class, you will present your research proposal to the class. The presentation should be no more than 15 minutes, and will likely be followed by a Q&A session. Powerpoint slides are required. The presentation will worth 10% and the paper 30%.

Letter grades will be assigned on the following basis:
A = 92.5-100%; A- = 89.5-92.4%
B+ = 86.5-89.4%; B = 82.5-86.4%; B- = 79.5-82.4%
C+ = 76.5-79.4%; C = 69.5-76.4%
D+ = 66.5-69.4%; D = 62.5-66.4%; D- = 59.5-62.4%; F < 59.4%
**Weekly Schedule and Readings (subject to change)**

**Week 1: Introducing the class; natural selection**

**Week 2: MLK Day; no class**

**Week 3: Sexual selection**

**Week 4: Evolutionary psychology and the adaptationist program**

**Week 5: Life history theory**

**Week 6: President’s Day; no class**

**Week 7: Mating psychology**


**Week 8: Verbal communication**


**Week 9: Nonverbal communication**


**Week 10: Signaling theory**

**Week 11: No class; Spring recess**

**Week 12: Kin and friends**

**Week 13: Aggression**
Daly, M., & Wilson, M. (2013). Evolutionary social psychology and family homicide. *The
Week 14: Intergroup Relations


Week 15: Explaining culture


Week 16: Final paper presentation