

**Soc 125
Evolutionary Sociology
UC-Riverside
Winter 2009
9:40-11.00 am, Sproul 1102**

COURSE SYLLABUS

I. *General Information*

Professor: Dr. Stephen Sanderson

Office: Sociology Department

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II. *Reading Materials*

1. Stephen K. Sanderson, *The Evolution of Human Sociality*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001 (chapters 8 and 10-16). (The book is no longer available from the publisher, so these chapters have been put on my website. Go to my website and click on the "Course Materials" page, and there you will see the individual chapters, which you can download and print.)
2. Stephen K. Sanderson and Arthur S. Alderson, *World Societies: The Evolution of Human Social Life*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2005.

III. *Course Content*

The concept of evolution is one of the great unifying concepts in modern thought. It is today one of the chief guiding principles of biological theory and research, and it plays a similarly important role in modern biological anthropology, which devotes itself primarily to the study of human evolution.

But evolutionary theory also means *social evolution* as well as biological evolution. Evolutionary sociology is a field of study devoted to both biological and social evolution. It uses the concept of evolution in its broad sense to study (a) how the biological evolution of human nature over thousands or millions of years has influenced human behavior in both the past and the present, and (b) how societies have been evolving over the past 10,000 years from simple hunting and gathering bands to complex industrial societies and the world system of societies. Biological and social evolution are intertwined. Biological evolution affects social evolution, and social evolution also in turn affects biological evolution.

The first part of the course discusses basic principles of both biological and social evolution. It also discusses the perspective known as *sociobiology* (also called *evolutionary psychology*). The second part sketches out the evolution of human societies from hunter-gatherers to modern industrial societies and the world system, looking at how both biological and social factors influence social evolution. The third part applies sociobiological principles to understand mating, sexuality, families, and marriage. The final part looks at gender, politics, and violence.

The course is organized around a series of fundamental questions. There are 51 of them. Some can be answered in five or ten minutes, whereas others may take half an hour. The questions posed at the beginning take an entire class period to answer. Some are easy to answer, others a little more complicated. The answers I will give to many of the questions will be controversial. As far as I am concerned, that is good: controversy is one of the best learning mechanisms available to us. Plus it helps to keep you awake and interested.

IV. *Course Structure*

I will lecture most of the time using Power Point.

However, questions are encouraged. You are free to disagree with me and draw your own conclusions from what I am saying. You can also argue with me, so long as you observe proper norms of civility and respect and the need of other students to have their say as well. But you have to have a basis for your argument. You have to back it up with evidence or logic (or both).

V. *Exams*

There will be four exams, the final included. These will consist of multiple-choice, true-false, and a few short answer/complete the blank questions. Each exam counts 100 points.

VI. *Term Essay*

You should be thinking during the term about one of the major perspectives of the course, sociobiology or evolutionary psychology, because your judgment of this perspective is the basis for your paper. Write a paper of 3,000 words (approximately 10 pages) in which you take 5 of the questions we have discussed during the term* and (a) summarize my answer, and then (b) argue either for or against my position. Note: This can't be just a bunch of personal opinions. You have to have a logical argument and/or evidence to support what you are saying. Papers are due on the 18th class meeting (that is, one week before the quarter ends). I will not accept papers by email attachment, and late papers will be penalized 5 points per day late.

*Your 5 questions may only be chosen from the following: 7, 20, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 40, 42, 43, 44, 45, 47, 51. Choose any combination of 5 that you wish.

VII. *Grading*

Your grade is based on 400 points for the 4 exams and 100 points for the term essay, for a total of 500 points. At the end of the quarter I total up your points, determine your final percentage, and assign your grade based on the following scale:

85% and above = A;
75-84.9% = B;
65-74.9% = C;
50-64.9% = D;
below 50% = F.

On the final exam I will give some extra questions for bonus points, probably twenty. These will be based on chapters from *WS* and sections of *EHS* not assigned or discussed in class. Each question will count two points, so it is possible to earn up to 40 bonus points (you get two points for each question you get right).

VIII. *My Educational Philosophy*

I am a rather old-fashioned, no-nonsense professor who expects his students to put forth a strong effort. For me, the most important purpose of education is to expand the powers of the mind and increase the amount of knowledge at your command. Becoming an educated person is hard work, but it is a terrific accomplishment. It is one of the most important things a person can do. Education is not simply about learning things you will need on a job. The better educated you are, the more you can get out of life.

IX. *A Few Course Rules*

- Do not sit and chat with neighbors during class. If you want to chat, do so before or after class. This is something that really bugs me!!
- Please do not bring food into the classroom, and no drinks except coffee, tea, or water.
- Being on time is essential. Students being late to class is also something that really bugs me because I find it very distracting.

X. *Course Outline and Reading Assignments*

Note: Readings marked **EHS** refer to Sanderson, *The Evolution of Human Sociality*. Those marked **WS** refer to Sanderson and Alderson, *World Societies*.

Class Meeting

1

Course Introduction

1. What is the Blank Slate?

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2. How Does Biological Evolution Work?

3. Where Did Modern Humans Come From?

3

4. How Does Social Evolution Work? (WS, chs. 1-2)

4

5. How Can We Apply Biological Evolution to Human Societies?
(EHS, ch. 8)

5

Exam 1

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6. How Do Hunter-Gatherers Live? (WS, pp. 32-41; EHS, pp. 260, 264-65)
7. And Is It a Good Way to Live? (WS, pp. 36-38)
8. How Do Hunter-Gatherers Decide What to Hunt and Gather?
(EHS, pp. 260-64)
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9. When Did Agriculture Begin? (WS, pp. 43-48)
10. Why Did Agriculture Become Intensified? (WS, pp. 49-51, 73-79; EHS, pp. 257-60)
11. Why Animal Herding? (WS, pp. 67-73)
12. How Do People Decide What to Eat and What to Avoid? (EHS, pp. 252-57)
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- 13. Are Humans Everywhere Economically Rational? (EHS, pp. 249-52)
- 14. Are Humans Natural Economic Exchangers? (EHS, pp. 265-72)

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- 15. Are Humans Natural Status and Power Seekers? (EHS, pp. 287-93)
- 16. Is Social Inequality Universal?
- 17. Which Societies Are the Most Unequal? (WS, pp. 41-43, 48-49, 51-55, 61-67; EHS, pp. 293-300)
- 18. What is the Potlatch? (EHS, p. 304-06)

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- 19. Why Markets, Capitalism, and Industrialism? (WS, chs. 5-6)
- 20. How Do Industrial Societies Differ from Preindustrial Ones? (WS, pp. 134-53)

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Exam 2

12

- 22. What Kinds of Mates Do Men Want? (EHS, pp. 178-85)
 - 23. Why Does Beauty Matter? (EHS, 178-85)
 - 24. What Do Women Want? (EHS, 178-85)
 - 25. Do Dominant Males Leave More Offspring? (EHS, pp. 161-64)
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- 26. **Why Sexual Jealousy? (EHS, pp. 182-85)**
- 27. **Why are Men Unfaithful? And What about Women?**
- 28. **Why Homosexuality? (EHS, pp. 185-90)**
- 29. **Why Exotic Sexual Practices?**

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- 30. **Why is There an Incest Taboo? (EHS, pp. 215-20)**
- 31. **Why Do Men Often Have Many Wives, But Women Rarely Have Many Husbands? (EHS, pp. 227-35)**
- 32. **Why, Then, In Some Societies Are People Permitted Only One Of Each? (EHS, pp. 227-35)**
- 33. **Why is the Mother's Brother So Important in Some Societies? (EHS, pp. 221-27)**

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- 34. **Why Favor Sons over Daughters (or Vice Versa)? (EHS, pp. 245-46)**
- 35. **Why Do Women Marry Up (and Men Don't)?**
- 36. **Why Do Some Men Pay to Get Wives? (EHS, pp. 235-36)**
- 37. **Why Do Some Women Pay to Get Husbands? (EHS, pp. 235-36)**

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Exam 3

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- 38. **Why Do Mothers Monopolize Child Care?**
 - 39. **Why Infanticide? (EHS, pp. 164-66)**
 - 40. **Why Male Domination? (EHS, pp. 195-205)**
 - 41. **Why Are Some Societies More Male Dominated than Others? (EHS, pp. 205-12)**
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- 42. Why Do Women Live Longer than Men?
- 43. Is Masculinity Just a Social Construct?
- 44. Are Males in Decline?
- 45. What Would a Gender Balance Sheet Look Like?

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- 46. Is There a Universal Struggle For Power? (EHS, p. 312-14)
- 47. Why Chiefdoms and States? (WS, pp. 79-81; EHS, pp. 311-13)
- 48. Why Is Democracy So Rare in Human History? (EHS, pp. 308-12)
- 49. Why, Then, are Many Modern Societies Democratic? (WS, pp. 134-139; EHS, pp. 315-18)

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- 50. Demonic Males: Why Homicide?
- 51. Demonic Males: Why War? (EHS, pp. 318-30)

Final Exam during finals week