ANTH 761: Current Topics in Physical Anthropology: Evolution and Human Reproduction
Peter B. Gray, Ph.D.
Email: peter.gray@unlv.edu
Office Hours: TBA
Office: WRI A126
Phone: 895-3586

Class Time: Mon 2:30 – 5:20
Bldg/Rm: WRI B114

Seminar Description

This seminar will focus on human reproduction from an evolutionary perspective. We will consider the various ways in which human reproductive anatomy, physiology, and behavior have been shaped by evolutionary processes. Throughout the course, we will attend to evolutionary and life history theory, comparative primate evidence, hominin evolution, cross-cultural data, neuroendocrine findings, and central aspects of sexuality and parenting. To do this, we first consider foundational evolutionary concepts concerning sex differences and sexual selection. We then address various facets of human reproduction, from mate competition to pair-bonding, pregnancy to cooperative breeding.

Goals/Objectives

Upon the successful completion of this seminar you will have:
(1) gained an understanding of the theoretical foundations informing an evolutionary understanding of human reproductive anatomy, physiology, and behavior;
(2) gained a strong grounding in contemporary data and debates concerning evolution and human reproduction;
(3) developed your own topical interests under the umbrella of evolution and human reproduction, as reflected in regular discussions and in a term paper.

The Graduate Seminar

A seminar is not a competition among the seminar participants, but an opportunity for cooperation, sharing knowledge and developing new questions. Take positions and defend them vigorously with reason, facts, and some polite consideration for your colleagues’ own desire to learn and participate. Begin to hone your professional skills by learning when to speak up and
when to yield the floor to one of your colleagues. Remain critical of the readings and of all other ideas presented, including your own. When others disagree with you, don’t take offense. Find their error or learn from their reasoning.

Grading

Grading will be based 30% on participation and 70% on a term paper. "Participation" will include attendance, contribution to discussions, and submission of two discussion questions/points for each week’s seminar topic. Discussion questions/points should be 3-4 sentences in length, drawing attention to a novel synergy, unanswered question, methodological challenge, or some other salient scholarly issue. The point of asking you to submit these for each seminar is to integrate your critical thought for that week’s reading before we meet, also favoring richer seminar discussions.

The term paper should be at minimum 20 pages of double-spaced text. The paper should employ a title page, sections marked by sub-heading titles, and references listed using APA format or some other professional anthropology or biology standard. The topic of the term paper should fall within the broad scope of the seminar. Most importantly, however, the choice of a term paper topic should synergize with your scholarly interests. You might write a term paper that serves as a draft prospectus; as the background and methods to a side research project on which you are about to engage; as a review of a subject that helps advance your grasp of concepts and material relevant to your graduate research; or as a draft of a manuscript you are preparing to submit for publication.

Required book purchases:


Reserve readings:

All required articles will be on e-reserve in Lied Library (under ANTH 761 or GRAY).

Weekly Schedule and Readings

AUG 26 – Evolutionary theory and human reproduction, Part I.


**SEP 9 – Evolutionary theory and human reproduction, Part II.**


**SEP 16 – Mating competition.**


SEP 23 – Mate choice.


SEP 30 – Long-term human sociosexual relationships.


OCT 7 – Same-sex sexual behavior.


OCT 14 – Female reproductive function


OCT 21 – Male reproductive function


OCT 28 – Pregnancy


Martin R. 2013. *How We Do It*, pp. 89-120.


NOV 4 - Birth


NOV 18 – Maternal care


NOV 25 – Fatherhood


DEC 2 – Cooperative breeding


Research paper is due December 2.

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