

Evolution of Human Cooperation (HEB 1385)

Spring 2018 - Syllabus

Mondays 1-3:30pm - Peabody Museum 52H

Seminar and assignments schedule is on the last page

Instructor: Dr. Giuseppe Ugazio

William James Hall 1420 (14th floor)

giuseppe_ugazio@g.harvard.edu

Office hours: M 5-6pm, and by request

Course description:

The level of cooperation found among humans is highly unusual compared to other group-living mammals. From procurement of food to protection from threats, no other species comes close to our high level of cooperation in its many forms, and cooperative behaviors are therefore considered a hallmark of humanity. In this seminar, we examine two of the dominant evolutionary explanations of human cooperation: cultural group selection and partner selection. We analyze a range of economic games involving property rights, collective actions, mutual help, and punishment that explain how and why fairness evolved in human societies. This course highlights the mental and social mechanisms that enable human cooperation and the fitness consequences that explain why humans are a highly cooperative animal.

Note: Enrollment in this seminar is limited at 12. This course counts towards the Junior Research Seminar requirement in HEB.

Course goals—you should learn:

- the leading proposals explaining the evolution of human cooperation: Cultural Group Selection Theory and Partner Choice Theory
- to explain human cooperation using proximate and ultimate perspectives
- to conduct rigorous scientific research in human evolutionary biology (i.e. what it takes to become a scientist in this field)
- develop original research projects
- to critically evaluate scientific studies/claims
- to improve your scientific communication, through writing, speaking in class, designing and presenting original research projects
- to understand current social issues (equality, global warming, etc.) from a biological/evolutionary perspective

Required Readings:

Richerson et al., (2016) **Cultural group selection plays an essential role in explaining human cooperation: A sketch of the evidence.** Behavioral and Brain Sciences, Volume 39, and a selection (TBD) of papers from the related commentaries [articles](#).

Baumard et al., (2013) **A mutualistic approach to morality: The evolution of fairness by partner choice.** Behavioral and Brain Sciences, Volume 36, Issue 1, and a selection (TBD) of papers from the related commentaries [articles](#).

Course grading and assignments

- 60% Research Paper (including 10% for proposal, 10% for first draft, 30% for final paper, and 10% for in class presentation of your research project).
- 30% Preparation and Participation: reflecting level of engagement with and knowledge of course material, evidence of having thoughtfully completed readings (for every class), and submissions of weekly questions in response to one of the selected papers. Each question you submit will be assigned a grade of 0, 1 or 2—0 for no submission, 1 for adequate, and 2 for excellent. Class absences will harm your participation grade.
- 10% Two in class short presentations of a paper selected from the required readings (5% each).

Your final grade will be determined according to your course score according to the weightings above. 100-90=A range, 89-80=B range, 79-70=C range, 69-60=D range, and 59 or below is E range. (80, 81, 82 = B-; 83, 84, 85, 86 = B; 87, 88, 89 = B+)

Academic Integrity

If you have not already, be sure to take the time to familiarize yourself with Harvard's guidelines on academic integrity, found at this [link](#). These guidelines are in force in HEB 1385, and any infringements will be reported to the Administrative Board.

Notes on preparation, participation, and readings:

You will be required to show evidence of your understanding of the assigned readings. You will be graded on the quality of your in-class participation every week, so you should come to class prepared to ask questions and discuss what you've read. Your participation should reflect thoughtful engagement with the material, i.e., thinking beyond what you've read, making connections with other course material and your original perspectives. You may sometimes be called on for your input. Please let an instructor know before class if you're not prepared and we won't call on you. Much of the lecture content will reinforce material from the readings, but lectures will also contain lots of information not found in the readings. We will indicate on lecture slides the references for new material so you can pursue further reading if you're interested (or want to try to clear up any questions or confusions), and we are always happy to discuss readings or lecture material with you outside of class.

Written work

For some of the articles assigned for each class each week, we ask that you submit written questions (no more than one short paragraph for each question) for discussion in class. Target articles – i.e. the article in response to which you should write your question – will be assigned at the end of each class. Each week your question will be due at 10:00 am before class on Monday, to give me time to read your questions and decide on those that should be brought into our class discussion. (Grading of questions is described above, see "30%: Preparation and participation").

In addition, you will become an expert on the topics considered in HEB 1385 by writing and presenting a research paper (3-5000 words, or about 15 pages, double-spaced) on the topic of your choosing. In class and in meetings you will receive guidance and advice in finding a topic for your research proposal. You will also receive detailed feedback on your research proposal after submitting the first draft, on your final paper, and on your presentation to the class on your work. More detailed directions on writing and presenting will follow.

Extensions for written assignments are not normally granted. I strongly recommend that you schedule the time to complete your assignments, so that last-minute crises do not prevent you from finishing on

time. If you have legitimate problems that you feel will prevent you from finishing an assignment on time, contact me well in advance of the deadline to discuss the possibility of an extension.

Assignments should be submitted via the course website (instructions will be provided) before midnight on the due date. Papers will be considered one day late if they are submitted after midnight. Five percent will be decremented from your assignment score for each day late (including subsequent versions submitted after the due date), and assignments that are more than 5 days late will not be accepted and will receive a score of 0. *You are responsible for ensuring that you have correctly submitted your assignment on the course website.* If you suspect a problem, then you should email me.

Collaboration is permitted (and encouraged) on assignments

Discussion and the exchange of ideas are essential to academic work. For assignments in this course, you are encouraged to consult with your classmates on the choice of paper topics and to share sources. You may find it useful to discuss your chosen topic with your peers, particularly if you are working on the same topic as a classmate. However, you should ensure that any written work you submit for evaluation is the result of your own research and writing and that it reflects your own approach to the topic. You must also adhere to standard citation practices (found [here](#)) in this discipline and properly cite any books, articles, websites, lectures, etc. that have helped you with your work. If you received any help with your writing (feedback on drafts, etc.), you must also acknowledge this assistance.

How to do well in the course:

- Read this syllabus carefully and make sure you understand the expectations of the course.
- Complete readings prior to class meetings, review more carefully after. Complete readings thoughtfully, look for main points, ask questions about what you don't understand.
- Participate actively to all classes demonstrating critical engagement with the course material.
- Prepare your research projects very carefully, these should show that you developed a strong interest in the topic of the course and reflect your scientific acumen and analytical thinking.
- Come to class, and don't "multitask," which reduces engagement and performance (and distracts those around you).
- Take handwritten notes (doing so increases engagement and comprehension) and review notes and slides shortly after class.
- Visit office hours! You don't even need to have a specific question.
- Ask questions and participate

The seminar and assignments schedule is on the next page.

HEB 1385 schedule for topics, assignments and readings

Date	Week	Topic	Assigned Readings	Assignment
		Unit 1 Introduction and Literature Review		
Mon, Jan 22	1	Course Introduction Prepare for debate next week!		
Mon, Jan 29	2	Overview: two main theories on the evolution of human cooperation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Richerson et al., (2016) Cultural group selection plays an essential role in explaining human cooperation: A sketch of the evidence. 2. Baumard et al., (2013) A mutualistic approach to morality: The evolution of fairness by partner choice. 	Discussion questions.
Mon, Feb 05	3	Cultural Group Selection I	Papers (TBD) selected from the commentaries on the main paper on Cultural Group Selection	In-class presentation I
Mon, Feb 12	4	Cultural Group Selection II	Papers (TBD) selected from the commentaries to the main paper on Cultural Group Selection	In-class presentation I
Mon, Feb 19		President's Day - No Class		
Mon, Feb 26	5	Cultural Group Selection III	Papers (TBD) selected from the commentaries to the main paper on Cultural Group Selection	In-class presentation I
Mon, Mar 05	6	Partner Choice I	Papers (TBD) selected from the commentaries to the main paper on Partner Choice	In-class presentation II
Mon, Mar 12		Spring Break – No Class		
Mon, Mar 19	7	Partner Choice II	Papers (TBD) selected from the commentaries to the main paper on Partner Choice	In-class presentation II
Mon, Mar 26	8	Partner Choice III	Papers (TBD) selected from the commentaries to the main paper on Partner Choice above	In-class presentation II
		Unit 2 Conducting Original Research		
Mon, Apr 02	9	Empirical Methods to Study Human Cooperation	TBD	
		Research proposal due next week: prepare for presenting your ideas in class		
Mon, Apr 09	10	Presentation of Research Proposals		Research Proposal Due
Mon, Apr 16	11	Data Analysis Strategies	TBD	Data Collection due
		Final Presentation of Research Project due next week: prepare for presenting your ideas in class		
Mon, Apr 23	12	Presentation of Research Project		Paper Draft Due
Mon, May 5				Final Paper due