

HEB 1285: WHY ARE WE DIFFERENT? HUMAN BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY



Fall Semester 2017

Thursday 10:00-12:30, Geological Museum 103A

Instructor: Dr. Lara Durgavich; ldurgavich@fas.harvard.edu

Office Hours: Tuesday 1:00-2:00 or by appointment; Peabody Museum 53A

****Please review this syllabus carefully. You are responsible for understanding course policies.****

Course Description:

This research seminar will use an evolutionary and biocultural framework to examine the history and differentiation of human populations. We will explore how ecological pressures (e.g. climate and altitude) and other evolutionary forces (e.g. genetic drift) have shaped biological and behavioral variation within and between human groups, and will consider (and in some cases question) the adaptive significance of such diversity. We will also reflect on how culture can influence our understanding of human biology, and discuss how studies of different aspects of human variation, such as 'race', have and continue to impact society. An in-depth research project/paper will constitute the majority of the course grade.

Course Aims – you should:

- Learn how to characterize and understand the range of human biological diversity and how it is shaped by genetic, environmental, and cultural factors
- Learn how to evaluate scientific studies of and media reports on human variation
- Develop your critical thinking and research skills
- Improve your writing and presentation skills

Required Reading:

Humankind: How Biology and Geography Shape Human Diversity (2015) by Alexander H. Harcourt

Additional book chapters and journal articles will be available on the course website.

Grading and Assignments:

20%: Weekly in-class participation

10%: Written discussion questions

10%: Article presentation

60%: Research paper (10% for proposal, 10% for first draft, 30% for final paper, and 10% for presentation)

- Please note that no extra credit will be given during the semester.

In-class participation:

Participation is a vital component of a successful seminar course. Your weekly in-class participation is a reflection of your level of engagement with and knowledge of readings and course materials, and will be **assigned a score from 0-3 each week** (0 if you are absent from class, 1 for minimal participation, 2 for satisfactory participation, 3 for excellent participation). Comments that make connections across course materials and/or offer original perspectives will be evaluated most highly.

You will also be expected to offer constructive feedback on classmates' presentations throughout the semester.

Written discussion questions:

At the end of class each week, I will assign each person a 'target' book chapter or article from the following week's readings. You will write a response/discussion question (no more than one short paragraph) to this reading, which must be submitted on the course website **by 4:00pm the following Wednesday**. I will read these questions before our class meeting and use them to guide our discussion. Your response/question will be **assigned a score from 0-2 each week** (0 for no submission, 1 for adequate, 2 for excellent). You will not need to submit a discussion question for the week(s) that you are presenting an article (see below).

Article presentations:

The final 30 minutes of some class meetings will be dedicated to student presentations of 'in the news' research articles. For your presentation you will create a set of slides to (1) introduce an article, (2) discuss its aims, methodology, results, and conclusions, (3) raise relevant questions or criticisms, and (4) evaluate media reports of the research.

You will also write a 1-page response to the article, to be submitted on the course website **by 4:00pm the day before the presentation**. This written response will take the place of your discussion question for the week.

Research paper:

You will work on this assignment throughout the semester, consulting with me to choose a topic, write a proposal, and write and edit your first draft and final paper (3,000-3,500 words, or about 12-14 pages double-spaced). You will present your results to your classmates on the last day of class. Further details will be provided soon.

Late Work Policy:

The following deductions will apply to written work turned in late:

1 day late = minus 5%

2 days late = minus 15%

3 days late = minus 25%

Written work will not be accepted more than 72 hours after the due date.

I do not normally grant extensions for written assignments. I strongly recommend that you schedule adequate time to complete your work so that last-minute crises don't present a problem. If you do need to contact me to discuss the possibility of an extension, do so well in advance of the assignment deadline.

Honor Code:

All students are required to adhere to the Harvard College Honor Code. To review the honor code, visit <http://honor.fas.harvard.edu>.

Additional information about the Academic Integrity Policy of this course, including details about collaboration, is available on the course website.

Information about properly citing sources is available at the following address:

<http://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do>

Course Schedule:

Reading assignments should be completed for the day they are listed. Any changes to the course schedule will be announced on the website.

Date	Topic	Readings and Assignments
August 31	Course introduction	
September 7	<i>H. sapiens</i> origins & Leaving Africa	Harcourt chapters 2 & 3 (chap. 4 optional)
September 14	Biological diversity I (ecological selection)	Harcourt chapter 5 Frost (2006) Campbell 2010
September 21	Biological diversity II (stochastic processes)	Harcourt chapters 6 & 8
September 28	'Race' I	Morning (2014) Yudell (2016)

October 5	'Race' II	Ousley (2009) Smay & Armelagos (2000) Satell (2002) Krimsky (2012)
October 12	Cultural diversity I	Harcourt chapter 7 Nettle (2009) Research paper proposal due
October 19	Cultural diversity II	Diamond chapters 8, 10, & 15
October 26	Diet, nutrition, and energetics; Life History	Harcourt chapter 9 Kuzawa & Bragg 2012
November 2	Human health; Senescence	Harcourt chapter 10 Karlsson et al (2014)
November 9	Additional dimensions of human diversity	Brutsaert & Parra (2006) Rindermann et al (2016) Pesta & Poznanski (2014)
November 16	The future of human biological diversity	Harcourt chapter 13 First draft of research paper due
November 23	NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING RECESS	
November 30	Research paper presentations	
December 7		Final draft of research paper due