This course will meet in Peabody 52H (near the common area)

The best ways to contact me are via Canvas, or using my Harvard email (ksabbi@fas.harvard.edu)
Office: Peabody 50C (in the PanLab)
Office Hours: Th 10:30-12:00 or by appointment

Course goals:

Over this course you will:

- Learn to formulate research questions and testable hypotheses,
- Gain practical skills in recognizing animal behavior and video coding analysis,
- Interpret and communicate primary literature on the evolution of social play in humans, and other animals with a special emphasis on nonhuman primates,
- Learn basic data management processes,
- Analyze and interpret primate behavioral data,
- Communicate research findings to a broad audience

Course format:

This a research seminar in Human Evolutionary Biology rooted in learning to analyze non-human primate social behavior (e.g. play) and apply this data to answering research questions. Though the course will include some lectures, the bulk of our time will be spent on hands-on research training, independent research, and student-lead discussions. The class will culminate in a mini research symposium where students will present their final results to one another.

Typical enrollees:

This course is geared toward highly interested and motivated students that wish to develop their research and presentation skills and/or gain experience studying chimpanzee behavior. Interested students of any year or level are welcome and encouraged to take this course, especially those that have not yet had research experience.

When is course typically offered?

Occasionally.

What can students expect from you as an instructor?

This is a very collaborative course where students will gain experience in doing real research. While this will include a good deal of hands on instruction by me, especially in practical behavioral labs, a major goal of the course is to provide a learning experience that is much closer to that of mentored independent research. For this reason, students will be highly involved in shaping the course, for example, in helping to choose journal articles that match their own research interests, and leading group discussions about course topics. As an instructor, I will guide students in this experience and support their development as independent and collaborative researchers.

Assignments and grading:

The main components of grading for this course will be (1) leading and participating in group discussions of course readings, (2) in-class activities including training and independent data generation, and (3) contributing to the class dataset and analyzing data for an independent research project.

Sample reading list:

For sample readings and an example course schedule, please see:
HEB_SP24_Primate_Playtime_research_course.pdf

Enrollment cap, selection process, notification:

Due to subject and nature of the course, it will be capped at 6 to 8 students subject to data availability. Priority will be given to students that are closer to graduation and with greatest need/interest. That said,

diversity of backgrounds and opinions is something that I always strive for in a course like this so if you want to join us but you are unsure whether it is the right fit for you, please do reach out.

Past syllabus:

For sample readings and an example course schedule, please see:
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Absence and late work policies:

Due to the participatory nature of this course, attendance will be necessary to your success, even though it is not explicitly graded. Late work will be penalized by 10% per day late.