

Minute Course description.

In this course, we will look at a range of topics through an evolutionary lens. These include family relationships, cooperation, friendships, mate preferences and aggression. In addition, we'll have a look at some of the processes relating to human nature (embodied cognition). These include questions such as whether the body controls the mind.

Course Load.

This course counts for 20 credits. 1 credit corresponds with around 10 hours learning time. Given that we have 2 contact hours, you should count to spend up to **8** hours each week working towards this course. This means that outside of the contact hours, you should count to be around *a day full-time* engaged with this course.

Course objectives.

There are 5 objectives.

Knowledge and understanding

MK1: You will demonstrate conceptual knowledge of biological approaches to human nature.

MK2: You will competently apply evidence to debate around biological approaches to human nature, in order to justify your own opinions.

MIP1: You will develop skills in sourcing, critiquing and reviewing a range of peer reviewed research publications.

MIP2: You will take charge of your own career development learning, through critical self-evaluation and reflection on the relevance of the module for career enhancement and future learning.

MPV1: You will display the characteristics of a Northumbria psychology graduate, by showing your ability to communicate complex ideas clearly and effectively in written form.

In addition, you will learn about:

- Leading research on human nature and embodied cognition.
- The methods used for studying human nature and embodied cognition.

Course work and assessment.

- Detailed information on assessment can be found in the electronic learning platform.
- Style and presentation are important. Please closely follow the guidelines.
- **If you run into issues please post them on the discussion board as *early* as you can, I might not be able to reply if you leave it right up to the deadline.** You should count on 2, max. 3 working days for an initial reply in the forum (if I am in office).

Attendance and engagement.

- The class size is small. I am therefore counting on you to attend. Please let me know, in advance if you are unable to attend.
- Given that the class size is small, this class will be run in a seminar format. There will be **weekly reading** (or a related task) and in-class exercises. I also expect you to actively take part in any in-class room activities.
- Please contact me if you have special requirements for the class and I will do the utmost to accommodate your needs. If you have very specific needs also contact Ask4Help or the handbook to find out which resources are available to you.

Prerequisites.

I assume that you have *some* basic knowledge on psychology covered in level 4.

Session.

The academic calendar is in your programme handbook. We will work through 11 topics in 12 weeks. Depending on timing and your interests, the content of this schedule might shift a bit. In the first lecture I will cover the structure of each session.

Suggested structure:

1. Introduction to Evolutionary theory
2. Does blood run thicker than water? (Kin selection theory)
3. Are we inherently selfish? (Explanations for cooperation and altruism)
4. Do men know what they want? (How has evolution shaped mating preferences in men? - Sexual Selection theory)
5. Do women know what they want? (How has evolution shaped mating preferences in women? - Sexual Selection Theory)
6. Undergraduate conference. (Reading / direct learning)
7. Do women know what they want (the return)? (How do menstrual cycle shifts influence preferences?)
8. Does the body control the mind? (Larry Taylor)
9. Does acting improve learning? (Larry Taylor)
10. How does the body influence language learning? (Larry Taylor)

11. Are we inherently 'social'? (The social brain hypothesis)
12. Are we inherently violent? How has evolution shaped aggression? (Evolutionary theories on aggression).

Some handouts, papers, or presentations for every course lecture will be available via the electronic learning portal. There is no need to take extensive notes, as all the key information will be on those documents.

Trigger warning.

In this course we may discuss issues such as body weight, body image, attractiveness, sexual preferences, sexual orientation, sexual relationships, partner violence, family violence, (sexual) violence, stereotyping, racism, discrimination, aggression, and war. Should you have experienced any related trauma or if you are struggling with these issues, then please do not enrol in this course. If you have any concerns, then please contact the lecturer before the start of class.

Contact.

- Ask me during class breaks, if you want a meeting or send me an email.
- By appointment only (email). I am in 'COCO' which is in the Northumberland Building (NB165).
- thomas.pollet@northumbria.ac.uk
- twitter: @tvpollet.
- phone: northumbria extension '4755'.
- Discussion board.

I typically reply within max. 3 business days (unless you receive an out of office).

Resources.

I have compiled a (non-definitive) [reading list](#)

Some books you might enjoy:

- [Beyond the brain](#)
- [Darwin's Dangerous idea](#)
- [Behave](#)
- [The Blank Slate](#)
- [The Red Queen](#)

I will post additional resources via the e-learning portal. So watch that space.