

# EVOLUTIONARY PSYCHOLOGY

## PSYC 377 (01), Fall 2009

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*Texts:* 1) Dawkins, R. (2006). *The selfish gene (30th anniversary edition)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [original edition 1976]  
2) Buss, D. M. (2008). *Evolutionary psychology: The new science of the mind* (3rd Edition). Boston: Allyn & Bacon

*Additional readings will be available via Internet or Blackboard.*

### Overview

This course is designed to provide an introduction to an exciting (at least to me) emerging paradigm in social science research. I use the word "paradigm" advisedly: "Evolutionary psychology" refers not to a specific set of research topics or content area, but rather to a fundamentally different approach to thinking about human nature and how it interacts with environments to produce patterns of cognition, emotion, and behavior. Although appreciation of this approach to psychological research is growing, it remains highly controversial in psychology (as well as other social science) circles.

Although we will utilize a textbook, our approach in this course will not generally be a traditional textbook approach. My goal will not be to provide a comprehensive overview of research and theory in evolutionary psychology, but mainly to get you to understand and appreciate its general perspective and how this differs from most other contemporary approaches in psychology. Toward this end, Dawkins provides an overview of modern evolutionary theory, particularly as it applies to behavior (though little of it concerns human behavior explicitly). This book is a true "classic," and I think you will find it interesting and thought-provoking. The Buss book is the first true textbook for the field of evolutionary psychology. I will let Buss provide the general overview of the field, and I will focus in class mainly on specific topics that are of particular interest to me (and/or about which I happen to be particularly knowledgeable). Although the course is not designed as a seminar, and will be too large to be run that way, I would like to have as much open discussion in class as possible.

### Course Requirements and Grades

Your grade will be based on the following: a midterm exam, covering the Dawkins book and corresponding lecture material (30%); a final exam, covering the Buss book and corresponding lecture material (30%); and a final paper (40%). The mid-term exam is scheduled for October 1; the final exam will be held at the scheduled time during the finals period. The final paper will be due on the final day of classes (December 4), though of course early papers are gladly accepted. Details regarding the paper -- content, length, etc. -- will be discussed in class.

One other assignment: Several weeks before the paper is due, I will ask you to turn in a brief (1-2 pages) paper *proposal* describing what you would like to write your paper about -- or perhaps two alternative topics if you are undecided. This will give me an opportunity to provide specific feedback and guidance to help get you started. The deadline for this assignment is October 20, though I strongly encourage you to do this earlier if you can so you can get started on the paper itself.

### Tentative Schedule

<b>Week of</b>	<b>Readings</b>	<b>Topics</b>
Aug. 24 <i>Thur only</i>	Tooby & Cosmides <sup>1</sup>	<i>reading: Evolutionary Psychology: A Primer</i> <i>lecture (Thur.):</i> introduction, course overview/preview
Aug. 31	Dawkins, chapters 1-4	<i>reading: "selfish genes" and natural selection</i> <i>lecture: fundamental ideas of evolutionary psychology</i>
Sept. 7	Dawkins, chapters 5-7	<i>reading: aggression; kinship; reproductive strategies</i> <i>lecture: evolution by natural selection</i>
Sept. 14	Dawkins, chapters 8-10	<i>reading: parental investment theory; reciprocal altruism</i> <i>lecture: evolution and behavior</i>
Sept. 21	Dawkins, chapters 11-13	<i>reading: memes; cooperation &amp; exchange</i> <i>lecture: critics' corner: determinism, empirical testability, etc.</i>
Sept. 28	[none]	<i>lecture (Tues.): review and catch-up</i> <b>MIDTERM EXAM on Thur 10/1</b>
Oct. 5	Buss, chapters 1-2	<i>reading: history and overview of evopsych</i> <i>lecture: adaptations vs. byproducts; individual differences</i>
Oct. 12 <i>Thur only</i>	Buss, chapter 3	<i>reading: survival</i> <i>lecture (Thur.): cognitive biases; "Stone-Age minds"</i>
Oct. 19	Buss, chapters 4-5	<i>reading: mating psychology and sexual strategies</i> <i>lecture: sociosexuality; sexual jealousy</i> <b>paper proposal due in class Tues 10/20</b>
Oct. 26	Buss, chapter 6	<i>reading: mating psychology and sexual strategies (cont.)</i> <i>lecture: emotion; love and commitment</i>
Nov. 2	Buss, chapters 7-8	<i>reading: parenting and kinship</i> <i>lecture: attachment theory; incest avoidance</i>
Nov. 9	Buss, chapters 9-10	<i>reading: altruism, cooperation, and aggression</i> <i>lecture: social exchange; friendship and the Banker's Paradox</i>
Nov. 16	Buss, chapters 11-12	<i>reading: intra- and inter-sexual conflict</i> <i>lecture: status, dominance, and prestige; self-esteem</i>
Nov. 23 <i>Tues only</i>	Buss, chapter 13	<i>reading: "toward a unified evolutionary psychology"</i> <i>lecture: culture and memes; multi-level selection; religion</i>
Nov. 30	Kirkpatrick chapter [pdf on Blackboard]	<i>reading: genes, memes, and levels of analysis</i> <i>lecture: "universal Darwinism"; artificial intelligence</i> <b>final paper due on Friday 12/4</b>

<sup>1</sup> available online at <http://www.psych.ucsb.edu/research/cep/primer.html>, or in pdf form on Blackboard