

**Evolutionary Studies 301:**  
**Evolutionary Studies Seminar Series**  
**Section 01**  
**SUNY New Paltz**  
**Spring 2008**

Professor: **Glenn Geher**

- Office: HUM 9B
- Office hours:  
T(5:30-8:00 p.m.); H (12:30-3:00 p.m.); **And by appointment.**
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Teaching Assistants:

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(office hours/location, etc., to be announced)

**Place:** Each week we will meet at 3:30 in HUM 7. On selected weeks (see calendar, below) we will migrate to LC 102 to attend public lectures by our invited speakers (this migration will take place mid-way through the class period).

## Required Reading Materials:

1. Wilson, D. S. (2007). *Evolution for Everyone: How Darwin's Theory Can Change the Way We Think About Our Lives*. New York: Delacorte Press.

(available at our campus bookstore and online (e.g., amazon.com))

2. Readings provided by our invited speakers. These will be made available on the course BlackBoard site.

3. Readings for your term paper.

## Course Background and Objectives:

Welcome to the Evolutionary Studies Seminar Series Course! This course is the cornerstone of the Evolutionary Studies (EvoS) program. Half of our meetings will include a guest speaker with expertise on some topic that is examined in light of evolutionary principles. The other meetings will include focused discussions on evolutionarily readings. Toward this end, we will read and discuss David Sloan Wilson's *Evolution for Everyone* – a multi-faceted, personalized introduction to evolutionary theory and its applications written for a lay audience (thus the title!).

This course, based on a similar course offered by our sister program at Binghamton, is designed to totally open your mind to what evolution is and to how it applies to all of life. Toward that end, we will attend lectures on our campus given by major evolutionary scholars from varied institutions and academic disciplines (including anthropology, biology, philosophy, and psychology). Further, each of our invited speakers will meet with our class personally prior to his or her lecture – giving us an opportunity to discuss his or her work in an informal, intimate setting. We are also hoping to have (free) pizza parties scheduled immediately after each public lecture to provide further opportunities to discuss the different topics and interact with our speakers.

Topics will be diverse, including, for instance, the evolution of the unconscious mind, the adaptive function of kissing during human courtship, and the political implications of Darwin's theory. This diversity of topics, coupled with the ability to interact directly with the scholars themselves, should make for an

academic experience that is nothing short of fascinating.

In the end, this course is designed to get students to do the following:

- A. really understand the nature of evolutionary theory
- B. develop an appreciation for how evolutionary theory applies across academic disciplines
- C. critically evaluate different scholarly approaches to evolution – and develop an understanding of the interface between evolutionary scholarship and human societies
- D. develop your ability to think like an evolutionist and extend human understanding of the world as a result (I know – this one’s ambitious!)
- E. write coherently about topics related to evolution
- F. effectively design and deliver oral presentations on topics related to evolution

Overall, this course is designed to provide you with a first-hand, intensive, and cross-disciplinary set of experiences regarding modern scholarship on evolutionary principles.

Each and every class you take should change your worldview – if even slightly – in some way. This class should be no exception. The journey will not be easy – the readings will be dense – the writing assignments will be graded with a critical eye – and the exam will be designed at a high level. If all goes right, the successful student in this class will be rewarded intellectually for his or her hard work. I want that to be you. Welcome.

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## ASSIGNMENTS:

**1. Posting of Content-Oriented BlackBoard Comments** Regarding Each Guest Speaker (UNGRADED – **14% of final grade**; each of the 7 weeks counts for 2%. 0 for zero postings, 50 for one posting; 100 for two or more postings).

A core element of this class will include visits by guest speakers on evolutionary topics. In addition to the discussion that we'll have during class, we'll have online discussions (facilitated by our teaching assistants) via BlackBoard. For each speaker, to receive full credit, you need to post at least TWO content-oriented comments on the appropriate discussion thread. Further, these postings need to be uploaded onto Blackboard within specific 11-day periods for you to receive credit. Specifically, your comments need to be posted within five days prior to the speaker's visit and/or the day of the speaker's visit and/or within five days subsequent to the speaker's visit. Further, your comments need to be content-oriented (e.g., I'm curious about the physiological mechanisms that underlie the evolved unconscious that Scott Barry Kaufman spoke about. In my neuroethology course, we learned that ...). If your comments are deemed as non-content-oriented by either of the TAs and myself, you will not receive credit.

**2. Questions Pertaining to Weekly Readings (UNGRADED – 12% of final grade;** each of 12 weeks. 0 for not submitting at start of class period, 100 for submitting at start of class period. Each accepted set of questions counts toward 1% of your final grade).

For twelve of our meetings, we will have shared assigned readings (including either chapters from Wilson's book or reading provided from the guest speakers). To increase our ability to have informed discussions during class, students will be required to submit TYPED questions and/or comments they have regarding the readings. The TAs will collect and keep records of these. These questions/comments need not be more than a few sentences. They are designed to ensure that all members of the classroom community have given some critical thought to the content. Importantly, please bring TWO copies of your questions/comments to each class period (one to be collected by the TA at the start of class, the other to be retained by you for your purposes during class discussion). These will not be accepted late.

Importantly, note that they may be identical in content to BlackBoard postings of yours (but they may be different as well)

**3. Reaction Paper based on ONE of the External Presentations (GRADED – 10% of final grade).** For one of the seven external speakers, you are to submit a brief reaction paper describing a specific concept addressed by the speaker (in his or her writing and/or oral presentation). In addition to the specific concept (or concepts) that you describe, you need to also some reaction of yours. For instance, you may summarize your opinion of the scientific merit of an idea, your thoughts on political implications of an idea, your own personal experience with content related to the speaker's talk, etc.

This paper (roughly 1-3 pages) is due at the class period subsequent to the speaker's visit. Thus, for instance, if you write a reaction paper to Becky Burch's talk on March 3, you need to submit your reaction

paper at our meeting of March 10.

**4. Topic for Final Paper (UNGRADED – 2% of final grade.** 100 for submitting at start of class period. 0 for failing to submit at start of class period).

As this course is writing intensive, it is designed so that you can obtain feedback on different elements of a term paper on a topic of your choosing. Such feedback at multiple stages is critical for honing writing skills.

For this assignment, you simply need to provide a thesis topic for your term paper. It can be on any topic that you can directly relate to evolution. Here is a brief sample of topics:

- Evidence for animal evolution in the geological record
- Evidence for plant evolution in the geological record
- Evidence for human evolution in the geological record
- Some specific physiological evolutionary adaptation (e.g., neurons in squids that allow for rapid propulsion)
- Some specific behavioral evolutionary adaptation (e.g., the nests of bowerbirds created by males during courtship).
- Some feature of human evolution (e.g., such as a paper on the hobbit-like creatures called “*Homo floresiensis*,” recently discovered to have lived in Australia)
- Mating behaviors in some animal species
- Human mating behaviors
- DNA as a tool for understanding shared ancestry across species
- The evolution of emotional expressions
- The evolution of human social systems
- The evolution of social systems of other primates (e.g., olive baboons)
- The evolution of the social insects (e.g., honey bees)
- The evolution of art

- The evolution of humor
- The evolution of human intelligence
- The evolution of religion
- The evolution of sexual dimorphism in sexually reproducing species

This list is, in fact, remarkably incomplete. Talk to me and the TAs about topics – and let the readings for the course help guide you toward a topic that fascinates you.

What to hand in: A brief (one-paragraph, or so) statement of the topic you'd like to study for your term paper. The more specific and focused you are at this point (all things equal), the better.

**5. Outline for Final Paper** (UNGRADED – **2% of final grade**. 100 for submitting at start of class period. 0 for failing to submit at start of class period).

Once your topic is set, it is usually helpful to come up with an outline (often in the form of headings and subheadings) to help guide your work on a big paper project. This outline can also help me help you.

**6. Preliminary Draft of Final Paper** (UNGRADED – **5% of final grade**. 100 for submitting at start of class period. 0 for failing to submit at start of class period).

This draft should be as complete as you can make it to allow me to optimally comment on your work. While you get full credit for submitting something when this is due (see calendar), I urge you to shoot high and put a lot into this draft. Further, feel free to bring to my office hours (or the TAs office hours) for feedback at any point in the process.

**7. Final Draft of Term Paper** (GRADED – **30% of final grade**.)

In 2005, the Quarterly Review of Biology published a paper on the evolution of laughter (written by Matt Gervais and David Sloan Wilson). While this fact is not necessarily impressive in an absolute sense,

consider this: This article is based completely on the paper that Matt Gervais (then an EvoS student at Binghamton) wrote for his paper in an undergraduate EvoS course (very similar to this same class). Shoot high. I want these papers to be great.

Your paper should be standard term-paper length – 10-20 double-spaced pages – and they need to be in APA (American Psychological Association) format. For information this format, please see:

<http://www.uwsp.edu/PSYCH/apa4b.htm#IF>

written by Mark Plonsky of the University of Wisconsin at Steven's Point.

**8. Oral Presentation.** (UNGRADED – **5% of final grade.** 100 for submitting at start of class period. 0 for failing to submit at start of class period).

The final two class periods will be completely dedicated to students' oral presentations. PowerPoint technology will be available. Your oral presentation should be based on your term paper. Your talk should take approximately 15 minutes (and you should expect about 5 minutes of question-and-answer). The more prepared you are for the presentation, the better. I strongly suggest that you practice the talk in full on multiple occasions prior to the final week of class. You are more than welcome to discuss your plans for the presentation with the TAs and myself as well.

**9. Final Exam** (GRADED – **20% of final grade**).

During the semester, I will work with the TAs to create essay questions based on several chapters from the textbook as well as readings provided by the external speakers. These essay questions will be provided to you before the final exam. You will be encouraged to prepare all of them ahead of time and to meet with me and/or the TAs to discuss your ideas regarding the essays. A subset of these essay questions will comprise the exam (which will be completely essay-based).

**Grading:** Grades for all assignments will be converted to percentages. The following equation will be used to determine your final grade:

- Final grade =  
(BlackBoard Comments for Presenter #1 \* .02) +  
(BlackBoard Comments for Presenter #2 \* .02) +  
(BlackBoard Comments for Presenter #3 \* .02) +  
(BlackBoard Comments for Presenter #4 \* .02) +  
(BlackBoard Comments for Presenter #5 \* .02) +  
(BlackBoard Comments for Presenter #6 \* .02) +  
(BlackBoard Comments for Presenter #7 \* .02) +  
  
(Questions for Readings-Discussion #1 \* .01) +  
(Questions for Readings-Discussion #2 \* .01) +  
(Questions for Readings-Discussion #3 \* .01) +  
(Questions for Readings-Discussion #4 \* .01) +  
(Questions for Readings-Discussion #5 \* .01) +  
(Questions for Readings-Discussion #6 \* .01) +  
(Questions for Readings-Discussion #7 \* .01) +  
(Questions for Readings-Discussion #8 \* .01) +  
(Questions for Readings-Discussion #9 \* .01) +  
(Questions for Readings-Discussion #10 \* .01) +  
(Questions for Readings-Discussion #11 \* .01) +  
(Questions for Readings-Discussion #12 \* .01) +  
  
(Reaction Paper \* .10) +  
(Term Paper Topic \* .02) +



(Term Paper Outline \* .02) +  
(Term Paper PRELIMINARY DRAFT \* .05) +  
(Term Paper FINAL DRAFT \* .3) +  
(Oral Presentation \* .05) +  
(Final Exam \* .2)

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Your final grade will be on a scale from 0 to 100. Final grades will be converted to letter grades using the following criteria:

94 - 100 = A  
90 - 93 = A-  
87 - 89 = B+  
84 - 86 = B  
80 - 83 = B-  
77 - 79 = C+  
74 - 76 = C  
70 - 73 = C-  
67 - 69 = D+  
64 - 66 = D  
60 - 63 = D-  
Below 60 = F

### Calendar

Date	Activity	Readings	Due
1/28	Welcome to Class!	This syllabus	
2/4		Wilson (chs: 1-6); Tiger's readings	Bb Comments (within 5 days prior and/or 5 days subsequent); Questions regarding Wilson; Questions regarding Tiger
<b>2/6 (W)</b>	<b>HAPPY DARWIN DAY! Guest Lecture by Lionel Tiger (Charles Darwin Professor of Anthropology at Rutgers);</b> 5pm (attendance is very strongly encouraged – but optional due the fact that it's on a Wednesday)		
2/11		Wilson (chs: 7-14)	Questions <b>PAPER TOPIC</b>
2/18	NO CLASS (President's Day)		
2/25		Wilson (chs: 15-22)	Questions
3/3	<b>Guest Lecture by Becky Burch (psychologist at SUNY Oswego)</b>	Burch's readings	Bb Comments (within 5 days prior and/or 5 days subsequent); Questions <b>PAPER OUTLINE</b>

Date	Activity	Readings	Due
3/10	<b>Guest Lecture by John Long (biologist at Vassar College)</b>	Long's readings	Bb Comments (within 5 days prior and/or 5 days subsequent);  Questions
3/17	NO CLASS (Spring Break)		
3/24		Wilson (chs: 23-29)	Questions
3/31	<b>Guest Lecture by Anne Clark (biologist at Binghamton University)</b>	Clark's readings	Bb Comments (within 5 days prior and/or 5 days subsequent);  Questions
4/7	<b>Guest Lecture by Eugene Heath (philosopher at SUNY New Paltz)</b>	Heath's readings	Bb Comments (within 5 days prior and/or 5 days subsequent);  Questions  <b>PRELIMINARY DRAFT OF PAPER</b>
4/14	<b>Guest Lecture by Susan Hughes (psychologist at Albright College)</b>	Hughes' readings	Bb Comments (within 5 days prior and/or 5 days subsequent);  Questions
4/21		Wilson (chs: 30-36)	Questions
4/28	<b>Guest Lecture by Scott Barry Kaufman (psychologist at Yale University)</b>	Kaufman's readings	Bb Comments (within 5 days prior and/or 5 days subsequent);  Questions  <b>FINAL DRAFT OF PAPER</b>



Date	Activity	Readings	Due
5/5	In-Class Presentations		
5/7	In-Class Presentations		
Date Determined by University	Final Exam		

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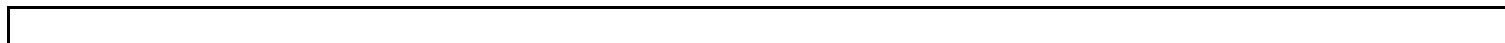
**Teaching Assistant (TA) Guidelines**

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The TAs for this class are included to be an important asset to the educational experience of this course. In addition to generally assisting with the delivery of this course, the TAs will serve the specific following functions:

1. hold office hours to meet with students to go over writing assignments and help students understand content, etc.
2. attend the class and help contribute to and facilitate discussion
3. stay abreast of all assigned readings to be in a position to help students understand material
4. facilitate BlackBoard discussions regarding the readings and speakers
5. collect and provide feedback on students written questions/comments which are due weekly

**Course Policies**



1. **Cheating**. DO NOT CHEAT. Any student caught cheating on an exam will automatically fail that exam and, perhaps, the course. In addition, his or her name will be reported to the administration.
  
2. **Plagiarism**. Plagiarism occurs when material is taken from a source without proper citation. If you quote something directly (i.e., if you use another authors EXACT WORDS), you **must** use quotation marks. If you borrow an idea and reword it, you **must** report your source. Any student caught plagiarizing will automatically fail the assignment and, perhaps, the course. In addition, his or her name will be reported to the administration. DO NOT PLAGIARIZE.
  
3. **Missing exams**. A Make-up exam may be given **if** there are extenuating circumstances AND it (the make-up exam) is officially **scheduled before** the scheduled examination. If such circumstances are shown to exist, you may be able to take a make-up exam. Special arrangements will be made as to the time and place of any make-up exams. If a student requests a make-up exam after the scheduled examination, and especially extenuating circumstances (e.g., a serious illness) are demonstrated to exist, scheduling of a make-up exam might be considered.
  
4. **Late Assignments**.

Simply put: from the perspective of a busy instructor, late assignments are a nuisance. If you can get through your college career without ever handing in a late paper, you're on the fast-track to success and I want to strongly encourage you to get there. As such, note the following:

- A. the BlackBoard posts and Questions regarding readings will not be accepted late (unless, perhaps, evidence of some dramatic and conspicuous extenuating circumstance are provided)
- B. The paper topic, outline, and rough draft will not be accepted late either (unless, perhaps, evidence of some dramatic and conspicuous extenuating circumstance are provided). If you do not hand these assignments in on time, you should do them anyway and bring them to my office hours to get my feedback so you can better succeed on subsequent assignments.
- C. ABSOLUTELY NO PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER THE LAST DAY OF CLASS (NOT THE FINAL EXAM). Further, any such late papers must be handed in **at** the meeting of the last class.
- D. If you miss giving your oral presentation, you will receive a grade of 0 (unless, perhaps, evidence of some dramatic and conspicuous extenuating circumstance are provided).
- E. All assignments that are not accepted will be assigned grades of 0.

5. **Attendance.** All students are strongly encouraged to attend all class meetings.

6. **SUNY New Paltz's ADA Policy Statement:**

Students with documented physical, learning, psychological and other disabilities are entitled to receive reasonable accommodations. If you need classroom or testing accommodations, please contact the Disability Resource Center (Student Union Building, Room 205, 257-3020). The DRC will provide forms verifying the need for accommodation. As soon as the instructor receives the form, you will be provided with the appropriate accommodations. Students are encouraged to request accommodations as close to the beginning of the semester as possible.

7. **SUNY New Paltz's Academic Integrity Statement:**

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of honesty in their college work. Cheating, forgery, and plagiarism are serious offenses, and students found guilty of any form of academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary action. For definitions of these offenses, as well as the process that a faculty member will follow if a student is found to be engaging in any form of academic dishonesty, see the section on Academic Integrity in the Advising Handbook, available at [www.newpaltz.edu/acadadv](http://www.newpaltz.edu/acadadv).

8. **Course conflicts.** If you have a regular scheduling conflict with this course (e.g., you will have to leave every class before the end of class because of work, you have another course scheduled that overlaps with this course, or you will be going to Rome for 2 weeks during the term) you should **not** take this course.

9. **Your paper for this class may NOT be based on a paper you have written for another class.**

10. **NO ELECTRONIC DEVICES** (e.g., cellphones, Blackberries, text-messaging devices, Sony Playstations, etc.) may be turned on **during examinations**. Possible penalties include failing said examination and/or having an academic dishonesty complaint filed against the student in question.

As a teacher I feel that my role is to help you learn, not to grade you, so please feel free to come see me or call me throughout the term if you have any concerns or questions. I mean it. Have a great semester.

**Writing tips.**

No papers with an abundance of the following errors will receive a grade of an 'A.'

1. USUALLY *affect* is a verb and *effect* is a noun.

e.g., This variable *affects* several things.

e.g., That other variable produced a very large *effect*.

2. If the subject of your sentence is singular, the verb and subsequent pronouns referring to the subject must be also.

e.g., The participant then provided HIS OR HER (NOT "THEIR") background information.

e.g., The point of these studies WAS (NOT "WERE") blah, blah, blah ... (*point* is singular).

3. NEVER use the word "PROVE" in a psychology article. While psychologists do many things, proving is virtually never one of them.

INCORRECT: These results prove that Schmedley's hypothesis was correct.

BETTER: These results support Schmedley's hypothesis.

BETTER STILL: These results support the hypothesis that Schmedley should change his name ... just kidding.

4. BE SUCCINCT. Do not use a lot of words to make a point if you can make the same point with fewer words. If two papers make the same points, the one with fewer words is, by my definition, better.

BAD: Asch's research on conformity is very interesting because it includes interesting research and has important ideas that are very meaningful.

BETTER: Asch's research on conformity is interesting for several reasons.

5. AVOID 1st person and, *especially*, opinions (unless they are asked for).

BAD: I am writing a paper on conformity. In this paper, I will talk about how social psychologists have studied conformity and why I am so interested in this interesting topic.

BETTER: This paper will address conformity as it has been studied in social psychology.

6. DO NOT USE CONTRACTIONS:

BAD: Subjects were asked if they'd administer an electric shock.

BETTER: Subjects were asked if they would administer an electric shock.

7. *It's* means *it is* (but you should not be using contractions anyway).

*Its* is a possessive pronoun referring to a noun that possesses something.

e.g., The frog grabbed the fly with its tongue. (here *its* means *the frog's*)

8. Punctuation marks go INSIDE quotation marks (when at the end of the sentence).

BAD: Then the experimenter said, "Oh Boy".

BETTER: Then the experimenter said, "Oh Boy."

BETTER STILL: Then the experimenter said, "Golly!"

9. Always follow the word "this" with a specific noun. Otherwise, your writing will be unclear.



BAD: Changes will be made at all levels of management. The impact of this will be enormous.

BETTER: Changes will be made at all levels of management. The impact of this restructuring will be enormous.

10. i.e., means “in other words.” e.g., means “for example.”

e.g., These people are thought to be cerebral in nature (i.e., they tend to think a lot).

e.g., Their diet includes several kinds of flowers (e.g., roses).

11. Here are some helpful word substitutions for you:

<u>Change from</u>	<u>to</u>
looked at	examined
got	obtained
did	conducted

12. Only use the word “correlation” if you are referring to a specific relationship between two different variables. Do not just throw this word around because it sounds good.

GOOD: A positive correlation was observed between number of hamburgers eaten and the size of one’s bellyache.

BAD: A correlation between these different ideas can be found. (This sentence simply does not mean anything).