

THE SOCIAL CONQUEST OF EARTH
University of Toronto
Summer 2020: ANT 218H5

Meeting Times and Location

Tuesday 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM DV 2080

Thursday 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM DV 2080

Instructor Information

Instructor:

Dr. David R. Samson

Email:

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Office phone:

(905) 569-4295

Office location:

TDHSC Anthropology 358

Office hours:

Thursday 4:00 PM – 6:00 PM

Quercus course portal:

<http://q.utoronto.ca>

You're an interesting species. An interesting mix. You're capable of such beautiful dreams, and such horrible nightmares. You feel so lost, so cut off, so alone, only you're not. See, in all our searching, the only thing we've found that makes the emptiness bearable, is each other.

~ Carl Sagan (Contact)



COURSE OUTLINE: The success of *Homo sapiens*, has been described as “a spectacular evolutionary anomaly” that has resulted in human domination of the Earth’s biosphere. We will use the comparative method to journey through the Animal Kingdom in hopes of discovering the *preadaptive elements* that enabled such incredible evolutionary success. On our way we will survey chimpanzee warfare, tool using octopuses, eusocial ants that domesticate other species, and night-time hunter-gatherer sentinels – all of which will allow us to better understand the forces that shaped unparalleled cooperative networks in humans. Finally, on our quest for the secret of human uniqueness, we will investigate the cognitive and behavioural blessings and curses associated with the drive to belong to a group.

COURSE GOALS:

This course will tackle astounding topics and questions, such as:

Truth: What is truth? Does objective truth exist? If it does, can it be determined, or is it outside the scope of human understanding?

Human uniqueness: What do we share with and what excludes us from every other animal on the planet?

Evolution: Is evolutionary theory weak, good, or strong science? What is its role when interpreting our place in the world?

Religion: Why does superstition and ritual exist and has evolution shaped these phenomenon?

Morality: Can science determine human values?

REQUIRED RESOURCES:

We will use two primary texts in this course:

Blueprint: The Evolutionary Origins of a Good Society by Nicholas Christakis (2019)

Children of Time by Adrian Tchaikovsky (2016)

Moreover, depending on the week students will have to read selected scientific papers or essays. Not only will the content from the readings help you prepare for lecture, but questions regarding comprehension of these readings are also fair game for the exams. **All readings are due before going into the associated lecture.**

We will also use the iClicker (at UTM Bookstore). Each class will begin with a quiz that will use the iClicker to record scores. Your device must be registered. Please see this link to register within Canvas: https://q.utoronto.ca/courses/96933/external_tools/198

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

1. *Culture Evolves:* The Proceedings of the Royal Society of Britain published a special issue on culture, "the second kind of inheritance," and our scientific understanding of its function not only to humans but to a myriad of other species in the animal kingdom. You will be tasked to write an essay on one of the 24 primary literature publications on the evolution of culture.
2. *Children of Time:* As a primary reading assigned in this class, around the time of completion of the book (see schedule of assigned readings below) you will be tasked to both provide a summary of the book's content as well as demonstrate its thematic relevance to the course.

COURSE MEDIA CONTENT:

1. *Happy:* As a supplement to course content, we will be viewing a documentary by Roko Belic. Roko journeys throughout the world, visiting more than a dozen different countries, cultures, and scientists (e.g., positive psychologists) to investigate the universal elements that are linked with people who have fulfilling lives. At the end of each class, I will allot about 10 minutes for viewing; content presented for in-class media is fair game for the exams. For students who miss class, it will be on reserve in the library.
2. *Podcasts:* As a supplement to course content, we will be listening to podcasts that pertain to lectures. Moreover, you will be responsible for answering (on Canvas) questions regarding content aimed at assessing content comprehension. I will post links online for students to

access, but I recommend downloading the *Stitcher* app where you can subscribe to the podcasts and listen for free. Podcast assessments are worth 2% each. Podcast assessments are due a week after they are assigned on the schedule.

- i. BBC Radio 4: *Human cultural evolution vs. genetic evolution*
- ii. BBC The Inquiry: *Have we always felt this tired?*
- iii. TED Radio Hour: *Truth and lies*
- iv. Conversations with Tyler: *Joseph Henrich*
- v. Big Think: *The defeat of defeatism*

GRADING:

Here is the breakdown for the course for exams, and assignments:

- 10% Podcast comprehension assessment
- 30% Written assignments (15% per assignment)
- 10% Quizzes (~10 quizzes, twice per week)
- 25% Midterm test 1 (50 questions, multiple choice)
- 25% Final exam 2 (50 questions, multiple choice)

GRADING SCALE:

Percentage	Letter Grade	Grade Point Value *	Grade Definition	
90-100	A+	4.0	Excellent	Strong evidence of original thinking; good organization; capacity to analyze and synthesize; superior grasp of subject matter with sound critical evaluations; evidence of extensive knowledge base.
85-89	A	4.0		
80-84	A-	3.7		
77-79	B+	3.3	Good	Evidence of grasp of subject matter, some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues; evidence of familiarity with literature.
73-76	B	3.0		
70-72	B-	2.7		
67-69	C+	2.3	Adequate	Student who is profiting from his/her university experience; understanding of the subject matter; ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the material.
63-66	C	2.0		
60-62	C-	1.7		
57-59	D+	1.3	Marginal	Some evidence of familiarity with subject matter and some evidence that critical and analytic skills have been developed.
53-56	D	1.0		
50-52	D-	0.7		
0-49	F	0.0	Inadequate	Little evidence of even superficial understanding of subject matter; weakness in critical and analytic skills; with limited or irrelevant use of literature.

Course schedule

Class	Dates	Part 1	Part 2	Readings/supplemental*
1	May 7	Quiz 1 Introduction: Instructor bio & class organization	Assignment 2: Discussion What's so special about being human anyway?	Reading: Christakis, Ch. 1 <i>Children of Time</i> , Ch. 1
2	May 9	Quiz 2 The human recipe: Hardwired & Software	Assignment 1: Discussion The human recipe: Sexual selection and mate choice	Reading: Christakis, Ch.2 <i>Children of Time</i> , Ch. 2 Film: <i>Happy</i> Podcast #1: BBC Radio 4: <i>Human cultural vs. genetic evolution</i>
3	May 14	Quiz 3 Primates crashing the universe: Big-bangs, extinctions and grasping primates hands and feet	Early hominins: Time get stand up straight and start walking bipedally	Reading: Christakis, Ch. 3 <i>Children of Time</i> , Ch. 3
4	May 16	Quiz 4 Wild nights: How sleep and fire made us human	The Archaic hominin adventures out of Africa	Reading: Christakis, Ch.4 <i>Children of Time</i> , Ch. 4 Assignment 1 due: Culture Evolves Essay Podcast #2: BBC The Inquiry: <i>Have we always felt this tired?</i>
5	May 21	Quiz 5 Alternative facts: What is Truth?	What's so special about Science anyway?	Reading: Christakis, Ch. 5 <i>Children of Time</i> , Ch. 5 Podcast #3: TED Radio Hour: <i>Truth and Lies</i>
6	May 23	Midterm test 1 (25%)		
7	May 28	Quiz 6 The cursed blessing: Tribal signals		Reading: Christakis, Ch. 6 <i>Children of Time</i> , Ch. 6
8	May 30	Quiz 7 The universal people: Tribalism and the evolution of societies		Reading: Christakis, Ch. 7 <i>Children of Time</i> , Ch. 7 Podcast #4: Making Sense: The evolution of culture
9	June 4	Quiz 8 Language the score keeper: Tribalism and the evolution of morality Give 15 minutes to go over rules Paleo DND rules – at beginning of class		Reading: Christakis, Ch. 8 <i>Children of Time</i> , Ch. 8 Paleo D&D Rules
10	June 6	Dr. Samson's 2nd edition Paleo Dungeons and Dragons		Reading: Christakis, Ch. 9
11	June x	Quiz 10 Being a 21 st century human: Trend lines not headlines	To boldly go...	Podcast #5: Big Think: <i>The defeat of defeatism</i> Assignment 2 due: <i>Children of Time</i> Essay
12	June x	Final test (25%)		

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MID-TERM TEST AND ASSIGNMENT MAKE-UP POLICY

This course will be using the UTM Anthropology departmental process for collecting medical notes and other university-approved documentation for missed anything. ****You MUST complete the online documentation process through this system within 72 hours of the missed exam, quiz, or assignment, or your documentation will not be accepted.** For more details, go to the UTM Anthropology website under the Undergraduate tab (<http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/anthropology/undergraduate>), and look for the page titled Submitting Documentation for Missed Work at <http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/anthropology/submitting-documentation-missed-work>

For the midterm test, you will need to contact the lead TA to schedule a makeup exam time. As for assignments, the day the assignment is discussed in class I will post the assignment online. All late assignments will receive a late penalty of 10% per day (including weekends); submissions **MUST** be RECEIVED successfully by the website by 11:30 pm on the due date (shown in the course schedule below). No assignments will be accepted after 10 days, as you will receive 0% on your assignment. You must email the instructor on the due date if an assignment is going to be late and you have a legitimate excuse. The appropriate medical documentation is required within **THREE** days of the due date in order to get an extension.

MISSED FINAL EXAM

Students who cannot write a final examination due to illness or other serious causes must file an [online petition](#) **within 72 hours of the missed examination**. Original supporting documentation must also be submitted to the Office of the Registrar **within 72 hours of the missed exam**. Late petitions will **NOT** be considered. If illness is cited as the reason for a deferred exam request, a U of T Verification of Student Illness or Injury Form must show that you were **examined and diagnosed at the time of illness and on the date of the exam, or by the day after at the latest**. Students must also record their absence on ACORN on the day of the missed exam or by the day after at the latest. Upon approval of a deferred exam request, a non-refundable fee of \$70 is required for each examination approved.

ASSIGNMENT TURNITIN

All assignments will be submitted electronically with the *Quercus* portal's integrated *turnitin* function. Turnitin will review textual similarity among student papers to detect plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com website.

Students who choose to opt out of using Turnitin.com must arrange in the first two weeks of class to simply supply hard copies to the instructor by the assignment deadlines. In that case, you will be required to provide research notes with your assignments in order to demonstrate the originality and independence of your work. Assignments without turnitin submission must be accompanied by an outline, first draft, and an annotated bibliography.

QUIZ MAKE-UP POLICY

There will be 10 quizzes in the course of the semester, one per week. All quizzes will be taken in the first 5 minutes of class. If you are not present, there will not be any opportunity to make up quizzes.

MISSED CLASSES AND NOTES

My lectures (Prezis) will be made available via a link I post on the *Quercus* portal. The links to my lecture presentations are only outlines of the course material. **This means that you won't be able to simply never**

attend class, look over the Prezis and then get an A in the class. You are responsible for all lecture material, not just the information provided on the Prezi. If you miss a class you will catch up best by getting notes from a fellow student. I highly recommend getting a “note-taking buddy,” whom you’ll entrust with good note-taking in your absence. Furthermore, there is an art and science to note-taking: I highlight important terms. Make sure and record these terms, and associate it with a mnemonic to help recall the meaning and context of the term. This should only take a moment, if it seems I’m moving quickly through lecture. Also, I suggest hand copying/typing your friends notes, point-by-point; this serves an important purpose as you’ll progress through the notes as I progressed through lecture. Any points you feel need clarification, please feel free to discuss with the TA and/or myself.

COURSE POLICIES (i.e., “the fine print”):

It is your responsibility to understand the Code of Student Conduct and the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. These can be found on the UTM website (Registrar > Academic Calendar > Codes and Policies) <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/student>

PLEASE NOTE:

1. Holidays and pre-purchased airplane tickets, family plans (unless there is a critical issue such as a death in the family), lack of student preparation or the amount of work in other courses are NOT acceptable excuses for late assignments or missed tests.
2. Your **Medical note** must state that you were unable to write the test or complete an assignment for medical reasons. The document must show that the doctor was consulted within one day of the test or assignment due date. A statement that only confirms a general illness is not sufficient evidence. Your medical document must include the official stamp with the clinic address and be submitted via the University of Toronto Medical Form:

[http://www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca/document/Verification%20of%20Student%20Illness%20\(VOI\)%20-%20Oct%2027%202016.pdf](http://www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca/document/Verification%20of%20Student%20Illness%20(VOI)%20-%20Oct%2027%202016.pdf)

3. **Email correspondence:** Please use your utoronto.ca email address to ensure that your email messages are not filtered out by spam software and include the course code in the contact line of your emails. I will try to reply to all appropriate emails within 48 hours. Keep your emails brief, and come to see me in my office for longer discussions. The same rules apply to any emails directed to the TA.
4. **Classroom & Lab conduct:** All cellphones, pagers and PDAs must be turned off and put away during the lectures and labs. It is expected that your attention will be devoted to the lecture/lab. There is NO FOOD OR DRINK ALLOWED IN THE Lecture Room or the Lab. Inappropriate use or handling of the specimens will not be tolerated. Photography is NOT allowed in the laboratories. If you violate any of the laboratory rules and regulations then you will be asked to leave the lab.
5. **Final marks** are tentative until approved by Dept. Chair and Dean’s Office & recorded in Registrar’s Office.
6. **Copyright on Instructional Settings:** You must obtain written consent from the instructor for any recordings (tape or video) or photography in the lecture. Without consent any reproduction of lecture presentations, course notes or other similar materials provided by the instructor is an infringement of copyright and is absolutely prohibited. If any of these activities are required due to an accommodation then it must be arranged through the AccessAbility Resource Center.
7. **Accessibility**
Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please contact the AccessAbility Resource Centre as soon as possible. The UTM AccessAbility Resource Centre staff (located in the Davis Building) are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate

accommodations (905) 569-4699. The sooner you let us know your needs the quicker we can assist you to successfully complete the learning outcomes in this course.

8. **Academic Skills Centre.**

If you need assistance with your academic proficiency (e.g. writing skills, note taking, time management, study techniques etc.) please do not hesitate to contact the academic skills centre for assistance at <http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/asc/contact.html>

9. **Academic Integrity**

The University and its members have a responsibility to ensure that a climate that might encourage, or conditions that might enable, cheating, misrepresentation or unfairness not be tolerated. To this end all must acknowledge that seeking credit or other advantages by fraud or misrepresentation, or seeking to disadvantage others by disruptive behavior is unacceptable, as is any dishonesty or unfairness in dealing with the work or record of a student.

Plagiarism – All tests and assignments are individual exercises. Please make sure that you do not plagiarize your work. This is a serious academic offense. It shall be an offence for a student knowingly:

(a) to forge or in any other way alter or falsify any document or evidence required by the University, or to utter, circulate or make use of any such forged, altered or falsified document, whether the record be in print or electronic form;

(b) to use or possess an unauthorized aid or aids or obtain unauthorized assistance in any academic examination or term test or in connection with any other form of academic work;

(c) to personate another person, or to have another person personate, at any academic examination or term test or in connection with any other form of academic work;

(d) to represent as one's own any idea or expression of an idea or work of another in any academic examination or term test or in connection with any other form of academic work, i.e. to commit plagiarism (for a more detailed account of plagiarism, see Appendix "A") ;

(e) to submit, without the knowledge and approval of the instructor to whom it is submitted, any academic work for which credit has previously been obtained or is being sought in another course or program of study in the University or elsewhere;

(f) to submit any academic work containing a purported statement of fact or reference to a source which has been concocted.

(Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters)

10. **Equity and Diversity**

The University of Toronto is committed to equity and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect. As a course instructor, I will neither condone nor tolerate behaviour that undermines the dignity or self-esteem of any individual in this course and wish to be alerted to any attempt to create an intimidating or hostile environment. It is our collective responsibility to create a space that is inclusive and welcomes discussion. Discrimination, harassment and hate speech will not be tolerated. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns you may contact the UTM Equity and Diversity officer at edo.utm@utoronto.ca.