

Psychology 381: Special Topics in Psychology

Fall 2011 Syllabus

Instructor: Prof. Debra Lieberman
Class Hours: MW: 5-6:15, Flipse 401
Office Hours: TR: 9:30-11, Flipse 463

Office Phone: 305-284-1566
Email: Debra@miami.edu
Website: www.debralieberman.com

Course Overview & Objectives

All species are a product of evolution and Homo sapiens is no exception. During the last 50 years, an increasing number of biologists, psychologists, anthropologists and philosophers have attempted to use evolutionary theory to understand human behavior and in particular, human sexuality. We will review two major works that have contributed to this effort.

Course Readings

Sex, Evolution, and Behavior, 2nd edition by Martin Daly and Margo Wilson.
Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1983.
The Red Queen by Matt Ridley. Penguin Books, 1993.

Grading

Question-A-Day (QAD): 25%

You will be required to bring to class a thoughtful question or comment for discussion on the days indicated on the schedule below. Your QAD should be thoughtful and should be about a paragraph long. DO NOT regurgitate a question/concept mentioned in the book. You need to write something YOU thought of while reading. I will give you feedback on your first few QADs so that you know what is expected of you. There are 23 days a QAD is assigned. To receive full credit, you MUST complete 20 QAD assignments. If you turn in fewer than 20 QADs, you will only earn half of the 25% -- 12.5%. I will NOT accept late QADs. If you are not in class to hand it in, then it is late and I will NOT accept it. There are no make-ups.

Writing Assignments: 25%

You will be asked to turn in 4 short (~2-3 page) reaction papers at various times throughout the semester. These papers will give you a chance to briefly summarize and comment on the content discussed in class. Each paper will be worth 5%. There are no make-ups.

Discussion Leader: 10%

You will be asked to lead discussion for 1 or 2 classes. This means that you REALLY need to understand the material in order to discuss it and raise questions.

Attendance: 20%

The Instructor will take attendance each day. You may miss 1 class without penalty. Each class missed thereafter will lead to a 1% penalty.

Participation: 20%

Each class, the instructor will make a note of those individuals who participate in class. Full participation includes coming prepared to discuss the assigned readings and sharing questions and comments about the readings. A consistent streak of participation is required to earn full credit.

How to do well in this course:

Stay current with the readings, Come to class, Complete assignments, Participate.

Date	Topic	Readings Discussed	Assignments Due	Leader
8-24	Introduction			
8-29	Natural Selection	SEB: Prefaces SEB: Ch 1	QAD	
8-31	Fitness	SEB: Ch 2	QAD	
9-5	HOLIDAY: LABOR DAY – NO CLASS			
9-7	The animal as “strategist” Human Nature	SEB: Ch 3 RQ: Ch 1	QAD	
9-12	The Enigma	RQ: Ch 2	Reaction paper 1	
9-14	Why Sex	SEB: Ch 4	QAD	
9-19	The Power of Parasites I	RQ: Ch 3 (55-71)	QAD	
9-21	The Power of Parasites II	RQ: Ch 3 (71-87)	QAD	
9-26	Genetic Mutiny and Gender I	RQ: Ch 4 (91-110)	QAD	
9-28	Genetic Mutiny and Gender II	RQ: Ch 4 (110-128)	QAD	
10-3	The Peacock’s Tale I	RQ: Ch 5 (131-149)	Reaction paper 2	
10-5	The Peacock’s Tale II	RQ: Ch 5 (149-169)	QAD	
10-10	Polygamy and the Nature of Men	RQ: Ch 6	QAD	
10-12	Sexual Selection: Competition for Mates	SEB: Ch 5	QAD	
10-17	Monogamy and the Nature of Women	RQ: Ch 7	QAD	
10-19	Sexual Selection: Mate Choice	SEB: Ch 6	QAD	
10-24	Sexing the Mind I	RQ: Ch 8 (247-263)	QAD	
10-26	Sexing the Mind II	RQ: Ch 8 (263-276)	QAD	
10-31	The Uses of Beauty	RQ: Ch 9	QAD	
11-2	Film: The Human Face		Reaction paper 3	
11-7	The Intellectual Chess Game	RQ: Ch 10 (309-329)	QAD	
11-9	The Intellectual Chess Game The Epilogue	RQ: Ch 10 (329-344) RQ: 347-349	QAD	
11-14	MHC and Mating: Symmetry & Scent Attractiveness	Thornhill et al. (2003)	QAD	
11-16	MHC and Mating: Sexual Responsivity and Fidelity	Garver-Apgar et al. (2006)	QAD	
11-21	Menstrual Cycle Effects: The Scent of Symmetry	Gangestad & Thornhill (1998)	QAD	
11-23	Menstrual Cycle Effects: Women’s sexual interest and partners’ mate-retention tactics	Gangestd, Thornhill, & Garver (2001)	QAD	
11-28	Menstrual Cycle Effects: Female preferences for dominance	Gangestad et al. (2004)	QAD	
11-30	Wrap-Up		Reaction paper 4	