

ANTHROPOLOGY 2237B-200

Human Adaptability and Resilience: Life at the Extremes

Department of Anthropology

BRIEF COURSE OUTLINE

Winter 2022

Version date: October 21, 2021

Class day/time: Wednesdays 10:30 am-12:30 pm + 1 hour asynchronous.

Classroom: SSC-2020

Instructor: Dr. Jay Stock (he/him)

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Office and hours: SSC-3316 – TBA / By Appointment

Humans are a remarkably adaptable species who have colonized almost all regions of our planet. This course examines the mechanisms that underlie our adaptability, including human biological diversity, the ways we adapt to environmental stress, and the resilience of our species in response to rapid environmental and cultural change.

Requisites:

Antirequisites: None.

Prerequisites: Completion of first year, including at least *one course* in Social Science, Science, or Health Sciences. Recommended: Anthropology 1020E, 1021A/B, 1022A/B, 1025 F/G, 1026F/G, Geography 1100, 1300B, 1400G, 1500F, Biology 1225, 1290B, Health Sciences 1001A/B or Health Sciences 1002A/B.

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. The decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Course Description

The course considers the characteristics that make humans a unique and particularly adaptable species, the adaptive nature of cultural and biological variation, and the interactions between culture and biology that shape our relationship to the natural world. The course begins by considering broad approaches to understanding human diversity; the roles of migrations and environmental variation in shaping human variation; theories of biological and cultural change; and the roles of 'plasticity' and life history variation in human adaptability. Using specific ecological case studies, in the second half of the course we will explore how humans have adapted to life in extreme environments, both those that exist in the natural world and those that are created by human activity. We will finish the course by considering how human activity pushes the limits of human biology through sport and space travel. The course will provide a broad overview of our understanding of human diversity, adaptability, and resilience in a dynamic and rapidly changing

world. This course will be based around a two-hour lecture each week with some supplementary material and readings online.

A full course schedule including a week-by-week breakdown of topics and assigned readings will be available on the course's OWL site before the first day of class.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will:

- critically evaluate historical perspectives on human diversity
- identify the mechanisms which led to the biological diversification of human populations
- understand how environmental stress has driven human variation and adaptation
- evaluate the role of culture in human accommodation of environmental stress
- characterize the prehistory of human migrations into novel environments, and the impact of these dispersals on human culture and biology
- Understand the impact of extreme natural and cultural environments on human biology

Course Materials:

There is no set textbook for this course. Weekly readings have been selected from the literature and will be available on OWL. Readings have been chosen to represent either landmark reviews of earlier work in the field, or recent perspectives of topical interest. None of the readings can be considered to provide exhaustive coverage of the topics but will need to be considered in combination with the lecture material.

Registered students will be able to access information about additional course readings through the course's on-line OWL site before the first day of class.

Evaluation:

Midterm 30%

The Midterm test will be held in class on February 16th, 2022. It will consist of multiple-choice questions.

Reflection Assignment 25%

The assignment will be a 1000 word (4 page) reflection paper to encourage you to explore the pattern of human adaptability to environmental stress. It will build upon the course readings with two related articles that you will find in refereed academic journals.

Final Exam 45%

The final exam will be written during the exam period in December. The format will be multiple choice and short answer.

Academic and Accommodation Policies

Statement on Plagiarism

Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing. It is also a scholastic offence to submit the same work for credit in more than one course. Plagiarism is a major scholastic offence.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and [Turnitin.com](https://www.turnitin.com).

In order to pass an essay course, the student must exhibit some minimal level of competence in essay writing and the appropriate level of knowledge of the content of the course.

Statement on Seeking Special Accommodations

No accommodations will be granted retroactively more than 10 days after an assignment's due date or a missed quiz or test. Please see your academic counsellor immediately if you will be seeking accommodations based on medical or compassionate grounds.

Accommodation Policies

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#).

Academic Consideration for Student Absence

Students will have up to two (2) opportunities during the regular academic year to use an on-line portal to self-report an absence during the term, provided the following conditions are met: the absence is no more than 48 hours in duration, and the assessment for which consideration is being sought is worth 30% or less of the student's final grade. Students are expected to contact their instructors within 24 hours of the end of the period of the self-reported absence, unless noted on the syllabus. Students are not able to use the self-reporting option in the following circumstances:

- for exams scheduled by the Office of the Registrar (e.g., December and April exams)
- absence of a duration greater than 48 hours,
- assessments worth more than 30% of the student's final grade,
- if a student has already used the self-reporting portal twice during the academic year

If the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence are *not* met, students will need to provide a Student Medical Certificate if the absence is medical, or provide appropriate documentation if there are compassionate grounds for the absence in question. Students are encouraged to contact their Faculty academic counselling office to obtain more information about the relevant documentation.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds, or for other reasons. All documentation required for absences that are not covered by the Self Reported Absence Policy must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's Home Faculty.

For Western University policy on Consideration for Student Absence, see

[Policy on Academic Consideration for Student Absences - Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#)

and the [form for the Student Medical Certificate](#) (SMC).

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the [Western Multicultural Calendar](#).

Institutional Statements and Policies

All students should familiarize themselves with Western's current academic policies regarding accessibility, plagiarism and scholastic offences, and medical accommodation. These policies are outlined in Western's academic policies by clicking on this link: [Western's academic policies](#)

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