ANTHROPOLOGY 3334G-001
Primate and Human Paleontology
Department of Anthropology
BRIEF COURSE OUTLINE
Winter 2022

Class day/time: Tuesdays, 9:30 am-12:30 pm
Classroom: SSC 3010
Instructor: Dr. Ian Colquhoun
Office: SSC 3428
Office hours: TBD
Email: colquhou@uwo.ca (contact me about anything concerning the course!)
Credit value: 0.5 credit

Requisites:
Antirequisites: None.
Prerequisites: Anthropology 2226A/B and registration in year 3 or 4 in any module.

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 aim of this course, as the title suggests, is to introduce you to the study of the primate fossil record and the evolution of the Order Primates. Of course, our species, Homo sapiens, is a member of this diverse mammalian order (in the Class Mammalia, only the Order Rodentia, the rodents, and the Order Chiroptera, the bats, contain more species than the Order Primates). Thus, in order to accurately conceive of our own species in a phylogenetic context, students of anthropology should develop an understanding of how humans compare with other primate species -- our closest biologic relatives. Accordingly, this course employs both paleontological and neontological perspectives. That is, we will consider the extinct species of the primate fossil record, as well as the major lineages of extant primates; the extant primate lineages can serve as models by which to better understand the extinct fossil primate species (there is a saying in paleontological circles: "the present is the key to the past"), but this approach also informs us on the limits of such modelling. Achieving a thorough understanding of primate evolutionary history allows for a fuller appreciation of the biological and behavioural variability of both modern Homo sapiens and the other extant species of the Order Primates.
Learning Outcomes:
Upon successful completion of this course, students will:
- be able to demonstrate familiarity with the major “crown clades” of extant primates, and will have developed an understanding of when the major primate lineages are first encountered in the fossil record;
- have gained an awareness of the major interpretive issues in primate paleontology, in particular the disjuncture between contesting approaches to dating major events in primate phylogeny (i.e., age estimates based on the fossil record vs. those based on molecular phylogenetic techniques);
- appreciate major patterns in the primate fossil record; and,
- have developed a solid comparative basis for understanding the biological context of Homo sapiens as one among several hundred species in the Order Primates.

Course Materials:
The required text is:

Evaluation:
The following is the tentative breakdown of this course’s evaluated work:
- Mid-term Test (35%)
- Discussion Group Participation (9%)
- Brief Article Summaries & Critical Commentaries
  [based on Discussion Group topics] (3 x 7% = 21%)
- Final Exam (35% -- only covers material following the mid-term test)