

Department of Anthropology
ANTHRO 2265A-650 - Primate Behavior
COURSE OUTLINE
Fall 2022

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Instructor:

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Office Hours: Please contact me via email, and we can arrange to consult 'Zoom'.

Course Details:

Credit value: 05.

Antirequisites: The former Anthropology 2265F/G.

Prerequisites: None

Mode of delivery: Fall 2022 academic term, this course will be conducted online. It is **asynchronous**, meaning that students will be provided with a variety of lesson materials and activities that can be done across the weeks of the academic term, although there may be tasks that must be completed by specific times.

Calendar Course Description: This course considers the behavioral patterns, and diversity, exhibited across species of the Order Primates. The course is not simply a descriptive overview of the behavioural diversity exhibited across various primate lineages. Rather, the course explores critical examination of theoretical models developed to explain primate behavior. That is, while the course includes considerable attention to the different behavioural patterns that have been uncovered in field research on different primate species, ***the real focus of the course is to critically assess the theoretical models that have been put forward to explain the behavioural patterns that we see in wild primate populations.*** Topics covered in the course, using comparative data on various primate species, include socioecological contexts of primate behavior, reproduction, growth and development, kinship and dominance, and communication and cognition.

Course Syllabus:

The mammalian Order Primates is composed of over 500 species... and counting. The total number of primate species remains unknown -- primate species that are "new" to science are still being "discovered" and described! The objective of this course is to introduce you to both the **behavioural patterns** *and* the remarkable **behavioural diversity** exhibited across the major recognized taxonomic groups of primate species (i.e., genera and families), within the Order Primates. As a starting point, we will consider just how we biologically define what it is we

recognize as a "primate". Some of the methodologies employed in primate field studies will also be considered to provide context for the text readings. Other topics introductory to the course will include an overview and brief survey of the taxonomy of the major lineages in the Order Primates.

Because it is not feasible to attempt a species-by-species survey of behaviour of all 500+ primate species, we will instead utilize a thematic approach to examining primate behaviour. Throughout the various topic areas in primate behavioural ecology we will cover (e.g., ecological and social contexts of behaviour, reproduction, growth and development, kinship and dominance, communication and cognition), a comparative perspective across species will be employed. Our entire inspection of primate behaviour will be rooted in contemporary evolutionary theory, with a particular stressing of socioecological approaches to the analysis, understanding, and explanation of primate behaviour; the conservation of nonhuman primate populations will constitute an underlying theme to the course.

NOTE: 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:

Upon successful completion of Anthropology 2265A-650 - "Primate Behavior", students will:

- Be able to identify broad patterns in the behavioural ecology of species across the Order Primates.
- Be conversant in the broad patterns of the fossil record of primate evolutionary history.
- Appreciate the ways in which Life History Theory applies to the growth, development, and reproduction of nonhuman primate species as it also does to other K-selected (i.e., larger-bodied) mammal species.
- Recognize the key importance of sociality as an adaptation in the behavioural ecology of nonhuman primates, and major ways in which patterns of primate behavioural ecology vary across primate species.
- Be familiar with how one can take the key ecological variables of activity pattern, feeding ecology, social group structure and composition, and dispersal patterns, and combine these to characterize the broad patterns of behavioural ecology across major taxonomic groups (i.e., taxonomic Families and Genera) within the Order Primates.
- Comprehend why, and the ways in which, an understanding of primate behavioural ecology is an essential aspect to efforts for the conservation of nonhuman primate species.

Course Materials:

The required text is:

Strier, Karen B. 2021. *Primate Behavioral Ecology* (6th ed.). Routledge, London and New York. Either the print version of the text, or the electronic (e-book) version of the book can be used, as can the 5th ed. of the book (which was also published by Routledge, 2016).

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

In addition to students completing weekly readings from Strier's text (basically proceeding at the rate of a chapter per week), I will also present weekly "Primer Notes" summary overviews to highlight key material in each chapter assigned and/or "unpack" Strier's presentation of the

material to provide additional context or examples. These "Primer Notes" can also be doubly used as study aids ahead of the mid-term test and final exam (i.e., I think you will find that the "Primer Notes" will provide you convenient summaries of important course material to serve as a baseline for reviewing and studying key course material).

Evaluation:

Mid-term Test – 35%

2 short written assignments (15% each) – 30%

Final Test – 35%

Mid-term Take-home Test– 35%

Monday, Oct. 17th – Tuesday, Oct. 18th, 2022 – "**Take-home test" format**; see below for course policy concerning the procedures for administering "take-home" tests. The questions will be structured for the answers to be in short essay format.

Written Assignments – 30%

Two short summary and critical commentary assignments (**15% each**, for a total of 30% of final grade); assignment submission periods:

i) week of Sept. 26th - Oct. 2nd;

ii) week of Nov. 14th-18th.

The **first short written assignment** will be a brief, 600-750 word (i.e., approximately 2.5-3 double-spaced pages in 10-point font) **summary and critical commentary** piece that focuses on a recently published (i.e., since 2012) **field study dealing with some aspect of primate behavioural ecology**. Your article of choice should be from a peer-reviewed academic journal (although, this does not necessarily have to be a primatological journal, as primatological research is also frequently published in academic journals that focus on biological anthropology, biology, or ecology). Possible topics span the range of material covered in this course – the diversity of field studies in the literature provides a broad range of socioecological information on many species, including research such as, for example: allo-mothering in colobine monkeys; vigilance and predator avoidance behaviours in marmosets and tamarins; extractive foraging behaviour and cognitive abilities in orangutans; seasonal foraging variation in folivorous lemuriforms; etc. Note that because this course is focussed on **the behavioural ecology of wild primate populations**, and our understanding of that behavioural ecology, you should focus your summary and critical commentary pieces on **field primatology research**, rather than captive studies in zoo or lab settings. For an excellent example of how to combine both summary and critical commentary perspectives in a short composition, see: Dunbar, R. I. M. (2001), "[Evolutionary biology: What's in a baboon's behind?](#)" *Nature* 410 (6825), 158 . If you have any questions, just let me know.

The **second short written assignment** will be a **prospective** (i.e., "forward-looking") **annotated itemization** in which you draw on the material we have covered in the course, and the material that you have read, to produce a listing of what you propose, looking ahead, will be the "Top 5 Big Questions in Field Primatology" (further details on the written assignments will be made available to students on the course OWL site).

Final Take-home Exam – 35%

The final exam will take place during the designated December Exam Period and will only be on material covered *since* the mid-term test (i.e., it is not a cumulative final exam).

Note – Both the mid-term test and final test will be structured as "take-home tests":

For the purposes of this procedure, the University considers a take-home test to be an assessment that could reasonably be completed by a well-prepared student in 6 hours or less. As a guideline, for long-answer and essay-based take-home examinations, the expectation is that completion of the assessment will require 2000 words or less.

Students will be provided online access to the test questions in a 24-hour "Question Reveal" period prior to the beginning of the test time-slot (which, for the final test in December, is assigned by the Office of the Registrar). Completed answers will be due by the end of the assigned test time-slot; a dedicated submission portal will be available on the course OWL site.

Student Absences:

If you are unable to meet a course requirement due to illness or other serious circumstances, please follow the procedures below.

Assessments worth 10% or more of the overall course grade:

For work totalling 10% or more of the final course grade, you must provide valid medical or supporting documentation to the Academic Counselling Office of your Faculty of Registration as soon as possible. For further information, please consult the University's medical illness policy here: [accommodation_medical.pdf \(uwo.ca\)](#)

Link to Student Medical Certificate: [medicalform.pdf \(uwo.ca\)](#)

Absences from Final Examinations

If you miss the Final Exam, please contact the Academic Counselling office of your Faculty of Registration as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam).

You may also be eligible to write the Special Exam if you are in a "Multiple Exam Situation" (e.g., more than 2 exams in 23-hour period, more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

If a student fails to write a scheduled Special Examination, the date of the next Special Examination (if granted) normally will be the scheduled date for the final exam the next time this course is offered. The maximum course load for that term will be reduced by the credit of the course(s) for which the final examination has been deferred. See the Academic Calendar for details for [Special Examinations](#).

Course-Specific Conditions Required to Pass this Course --

While Anthropology 2265A is not "officially" considered an "essay course" under the University's guidelines, **the two short written assignments are still required elements of this course**.

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](#).