

# Animal Behavior and Comparative Psychology

Fall 2012

**PSY 316**  
**ID: 2646**

Instructor: Elena Tsoy, MSc  
Office: AUCA Main Building, 209  
Phone: 663309 (\*239)  
Email: [elenatsoy@gmail.com](mailto:elenatsoy@gmail.com)  
Office hours: by appointment  
Course language: English  
Classes: F. 10-50  
Number of credits: 2  
Course status: required

**Course description:** The course provides a general overview of *comparative psychology* – a science of animal behavior and cross-species comparisons between humans and other species. The science of comparative psychology draws from evolutionary theory, ethology, and psychological science in its attempt to get insights about evolution of human behavior and mental processes.

**The main objective** of the course is to provide students with sufficient knowledge in comparative psychology and give them an opportunity to use animal models in the study of human behaviors.

## **Core readings:**

1. Alcock, J. *Animal Behavior: an Evolutionary Approach. Ninth edition.* (2009).
2. Dugatkin, L.A. *Principles of Animal Behavior. Second edition.* (2009).
3. Goldsmith, T. H. *The Biological Roots of Human Nature: Forging Links between Evolution and Behavior.* (1991).
4. Dawkins, J. *The Selfish Gene.* (1976).
5. Avery, J. *Information Theory and Evolution.* (2003).
6. Barkow, J., Cosmides, L., Tooby, J. *The Adapted Mind. Evolutionary Psychology and the Generation of Culture.* (1995).
7. Cartwright, J. *Evolution and Human Behavior: Darwinian Perspectives in Human Nature. Second edition.* (2000).
8. Khalil, E.L., Boulding, K. *Evolution, Order, and Complexity.* (1996).
9. Pigliucci, M., Kaplan, J. *Making Sense of Evolution: the Conceptual Foundations of Evolutionary Biology.* (2010).
10. Johansson, S. *Origins of Language. Constraints on Hypotheses.* (2005).

## Course assessment:

- 1. Attendance – 5%.** It is recommended that students attend all the classes (missing of any of the classes will effect this portion of the grade).
- 2. Participation – 15%.** Students are expected to participate in the **course discussions**, take **pop-quizzes** in class and do short **home assignments**. Students making sure to fulfill all of the aforementioned requirements will get the maximum grade for participation. Being unprepared for seminar discussions, poor performance on pop-quizzes, and/or failure to prepare homework assignments will results in 0% participation grade.
- 3. Presentation – 20%.** Students are required to make a presentation (timing requirements: maximum of 15 minutes) based on the course paper materials. It is required that students consult with the instructor prior to presenting their topic.
- 4. Literature review – 25%.** The course paper for this course needs to be based on the student's presentation and has to take form of a literature review of the topic presented by the student.  
*Format of the paper: 4-6 pages, Times New Roman, 12 font, 1.5 space, APA style formatting.*
- 5. Exams – 35%.** Students will take the **midterm exam**, covering the first half of the course material (maximum grade of **15%**). Likewise, the **final exam** will cover the second half of the material and will be graded as **20%** of the final grade for the course.

**Bonus points – up to 5% bonus points are available.** Students have an opportunity to receive bonus points for their performance during the course. Bonus points will be provided to students who have actively participated in the majority of class sessions and/or have undertaken a creative approach in their presentations and papers. Moreover, additional points are available through successful completion of bonus tasks on exams. No more than one bonus point will be provided for each individual assignment.

## Grading:

**“X” grade policy.** Students will get a grade of “X” in case of missing **more than 5 classes** in absence of a proper excuse supported by an official note. Otherwise, including cases of attending classes but failure to fulfill the assignments, students will be graded according to the following scale:

A	91 – 100%	C	61 – 65%
A-	85 – 90%	C-	56 – 60%
B+	80 - 84%	D+	51 – 55%
B	75 – 79%	D	46 – 50%
B-	70 – 74%	D-	41 – 45%
C+	66 – 69%	F	0 – 40 %

### **Assessment of individual assignments:**

#### Presentation (maximum of 20):

Content – 10

Comprehensible presentation of the topic – 3

Ability to answer questions and respond to opinions – 5

Format – 2

#### Literature review (maximum of 25):

Content – 10

Format – 3

Grammar and punctuation – 5

Comprehensive list of references – 5

Creativity – 2

### **Tentative list of topics for the LITERATURE REVIEW and PRESENTATION:**

- ~ *Theories and mathematical models of evolution of language in humans*
- ~ *Evolution of human family*
- ~ *Aggression and violence as evolutionary stable adaptation strategies*
- ~ *Evolution of altruism in animals and humans*
- ~ *Advanced learning in human and animals: evolutionary approach*
- ~ *Animal cognition and decision making*
- ~ *Evolution of mating strategies in humans*
- ~ *Personality in animals*
- ~ *Evolution and significance of play activities in animals and humans*
- ~ *History of ape studies: their impact and significance for psychological science*

**Class schedule:**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Discussion topics/Student Presentations</b>
7.09	Introduction. History of evolutionary thought.	
14.09	Foundations of evolutionary psychology.	
21.09	Levels of behavioral analysis: proximate, ultimate factors. Five forces of evolution.	
28.09	When and where we enter: evolution of hominids.	<i>Speciation mechanisms.</i> <i>Human beings as a biological species.</i>
5.10	Individual learning and cultural transmission.	
12.10	Evolution of communication and language.	
19.10	Evolution of language and culture in humans.	<i>Evolution of language.</i>
<b>26.10</b>	<b>Midterm exam</b>	
2.11	Evolution of social behavior in animals and humans. Kinship.	<i>Evolution of altruism.</i>
9.11	Evolution of social behavior in animals and humans. Cooperation.	<i>Evolution of altruism.</i>
16.11	Evolution of a human family.	<i>Insights and problems of application of Emlen's family evolutionary theory to human species.</i>
23.11	Mating systems and sexual selection.	<i>Evolution of mate choice and sexual selection in humans.</i>
30.11	Animal personalities. Animal cognition.	
7.12	Autism and animal behavior insights. Movie: "Temple Grandin."	<i>Discussion of the book "Animals in Transition" by Temple Grandin.</i>
14.12	Autism and animal behavior insights. Movie: "Temple Grandin."	<i>Discussion of the book "Animals in Transition" by Temple Grandin.</i>
<b>21.12</b>	<b>Final exam</b>	