

– HEB 1330 –

PRIMATE SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

COURSE INFORMATION

Term/Time: Spring 2019/MW 3-4:30PM (section: R 12-1PM)

Location: MCZ 529

HEB req: Behavior

Instructors:

Isaac Schamberg

isaac_schamberg@fas.harvard.edu

Offices: Peabody 50D

Office hours: T 3-4PM

Christine Webb

christinewebb@fas.harvard.edu

Peabody 50C

W 4:30-5:30PM

(TF) Emily Walco

erwalco@g.harvard.edu

MCZ 533A

W 2-3PM

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course provides an overview of primate social behavior and cognition, guided by three primary perspectives. Adopting a *primate's perspective*, we will get a glimpse into the daily life of a primate. What are the important features of their lives? How do they see the world? What does it take to be a successful individual? Social relationships will play a central role as we address each of these questions. Through an *evolutionary perspective*, we will examine the selective pressures that have shaped primates in order to understand the differences between primate species. Finally, we will consider the *human perspective*, questioning what makes our species unique from other primates. The continuities and discontinuities that define this human-primate interface will have corresponding implications for animal ethics (including contemporary personhood debates) and conservation. Other topics span friendships, kinship, sex and mate choice, dominance, conflict resolution, communication, cognition, emotion, parental care, altruism, language, and culture.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Explore fundamental aspects of primate social lives, thinking like a scientist who studies them
- Understand theory of evolution by natural selection within the context of the primate order
- Appreciate the links (or lack thereof) between human and nonhuman primate sociality
- Conduct research on primate social behavior using systematic methodological approaches
- Critically evaluate scientific articles, including review, empirical, and theory papers
- Effectively communicate (both orally and written) your resulting knowledge and opinions
- Apply what you have learned to explore unresolved research questions in primatology

ASSIGNMENTS/GRADING

- **Exams (40%):** There will be 2 exams in this course. The first will assess basic knowledge on primates and evolution, including taxonomy, social organization, and relationships (15%). The second will be cumulative, comprising the remainder of the topics covered in the course (25%). Both exams will include multiple-choice and short answer questions that draw on material covered in lectures, sections, readings, and media (films and podcasts).
- **Papers (40%):** More detailed descriptions of the assignments will be available on Canvas. The instructors/TF are here to help as you develop your scientific writing skills, and will refer you to the Harvard Writing Center (<https://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu>), which is an excellent student resource offering both scheduled appointments and drop-in hours.
 - 1) **Harvard Yard Study (4-5 pages) (15%):** You will conduct your own study of primate behavior in Harvard Yard. The assignment will require you to create a research question, collect data on people in their natural habitat, analyze the data, write up the results, and present the findings during section.
 - 2) **Literature Review (6-7 pages) (25%):** You will select a topic, conduct a review of the relevant scientific literature, and propose possible future research directions that would address outstanding questions in the field (20%; 5% outline). We will plan individual brainstorming sessions with you throughout the term to ensure you are on the right track.
- **Section/Zoo (20%):** Sections will include activities and discussions designed to convey how primatological research is conducted. Your section grade depends on four components, including participation (5%) and a mandatory class visit to the Franklin Park Zoo (5%), which has been scheduled for Saturday, April 6th. Further, each student will give a presentation following the Harvard Yard exercise (5%), and student groups will lead one discussion that analyzes one of the assigned scientific articles (5%).

READINGS

- There is one required book for the course: Cheney, D.L. & Seyfarth, R.M. (2007). *Baboon Metaphysics*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- All other readings will be posted on the course's Canvas site. Readings with a * on the updated online course syllabus will refer to the scientific articles assigned for student-led discussions in section.
- Readings are designed to complement lecture material, and section will provide the opportunity to dive deeper into the scientific articles. Therefore, you should come to section with questions and ready to actively participate in healthy discussions and debates about the readings.

POLICIES

- **Assignments/attendance:** For a late assignment or missed exam to be excused, you must provide appropriate documentation from a medical professional, and let the instructors/TF know *before* the due date in order to make other arrangements. Attendance to weekly section meetings is mandatory, and unexcused absences will be deducted from your participation grade. If you cannot make the zoo fieldtrip, you will need to make your own arrangements to travel to the zoo by April 7th so that your data can be uploaded to the collective dataset. Unexcused late work (midnight cut-off) will be penalized one grade per day (e.g., A- to a B+). Work should be submitted via Canvas, and you are responsible for ensuring that it has been submitted properly (if you have any issues, send the TF your assignment via e-mail before the due date).
- **Devices:** The use of laptops or other electronic devices such as tablets or phones in class is strictly forbidden. An exception to this rule can be made only for those students with special needs (see below). A growing body of research in education suggests that devices detract from learning (both for you and those around you), while taking notes by hand fosters better comprehension and retention of the material. We will post some information about these studies along with resources for developing effective note-taking skills to Canvas, for those who are curious to learn more. Lecture slides will be uploaded to Canvas following each class session.
- **Students with disabilities:** If you require particular classroom accommodations or support services, please contact the Harvard University Disability Services (<https://accessibility.harvard.edu>) to facilitate the necessary arrangements.
- **Academic integrity:** We expect students to conduct themselves according to the Harvard College Student Handbook. Please carefully review the policies on academic integrity and academic dishonesty outlined here: <https://handbook.fas.harvard.edu/book/academic-integrity>.

SCHEDULE

Who	When	Topics	Readings / Assessments
Intro / Primatology & Evolution Overview			
CW/IS	1/28	Why study primates? Course overview & expectations	<i>Baboon Metaphysics</i> , Chapters 1-2
CW	1/30	Primate characteristics Taxonomy & phylogeny	Martin (2012) Groves (2017)
CW	2/4	Evolution & natural selection Tinbergen's 4 Qs	Krebs & Davies (2012)

Social Organization & Ecology			
IS	2/6	Selection pressures that shape primate societies	<i>Baboon Metaphysics</i> , Chapter 3 Noe & Bshary (1997)
IS	2/11	A day in the life of a primate	Boesch (2002)
IS	2/13	Sex & mate choice	<i>Baboon Metaphysics</i> , Chapter 4 Snyder-Mackler et al. (2010)
	2/18	President's Day – no class	
Social Relationships			
IS	2/20	Social relationships: What are they? Who forms them? Why do they matter?	<i>Baboon Metaphysics</i> , Chapters 5-6 Cheney et al. (2016) *Silk et al. (2018) *McFarland et al. (2017)
CW	2/25	How do primates manage conflicts? Aggression, politics, dominance, & reconciliation	*Sapolsky (2005) *de Waal (2000)
CW	2/27	What's the point of a large brain? Social flexibility & the social intelligence hypothesis	<i>Baboon Metaphysics</i> , Chapter 7 Dunbar (1998)
CW/IS	3/4		Exam 1
Communication			
IS	3/6	What do primate calls mean?	<i>Baboon Metaphysics</i> , Chapter 10 Submit idea for Paper 1 Friday 3/8
IS	3/11	Do primates have grammar?	*Ouattara et al. (2009)
IS	3/13	Ape gestures & the ape language projects	*Graham et al. (2018) Film: <i>Project Nim</i>
Enjoy Spring Break – no class			
Social Cognition & Emotion			
IS	3/25	Primate cognition: insights from the lab	Schmidt & Fischer (2011) Mulcahy & Call (2006)

EW	3/27	Social development, attachment, infant/juvenile behavior, & play	Amici et al. (2019) Clay & de Waal (2013)
CW	4/1	Self-other awareness; social emotions, empathy, & consolation	<i>Baboon Metaphysics</i> , Chapter 9 Paper 1 due Meetings to brainstorm Paper 2 start
Human Insights			
CW/IS	4/3	Are chimpanzees or bonobos a better model for human ancestors?	Hare & Wrangham (2018) Calcagno & Fuentes (2012) Zoo ‘fieldtrip’ Saturday 4/6
CW	4/8	Social learning, imitation, teaching, traditions	Whiten et al. (1999) Sapolsky & Share (2004)
CW	4/10	Culture, innovation, shared intentionality, rituals	Call (2009) TTBook podcast: Do Chimpanzees Have Spiritual Experiences?
IS	4/15	The nicest primate: human prosociality, cooperation, & self-domestication	Silk et al. (2005) Warneken & Tomasello (2009)
IS	4/17	Cooperative breeding, theory of mind, & language	<i>Baboon Metaphysics</i> , Chapters 8 & 11 Burkart et al. (2010) Paper 2 outline due Friday 4/19
CW	4/22	Self-awareness ‘Social’ personalities Humans as primates	<i>Baboon Metaphysics</i> , Chapter 12 Seyfarth et al. (2012) Weiss et al. (2012)
Ethics & Conservation			
CW	4/24	What about the moral status of other primates? Animal ethics Primate personhood	NYTimes Magazine: Siebert (2014) NYTimes Op-Doc: Animals are Persons Too RadioLab podcast: Inside Out Cage
CW	4/29	What if wild primates go extinct? Conservation Ethnoprimateology	Estrada et al. (2017) Fuentes (2012) Film: <i>Virunga</i>
CW/IS	5/1	Wrap-up & review	Paper 2 due Monday 5/3 Exam 2 Monday 5/13 @ 2PM

— Syllabus is subject to revision. Updates will be posted on Canvas —