

Primate Behavior and Ecology
Anthro 372/ES 372, Sec 001C
UW Oshkosh Department of Religious Studies and Anthropology
UW Oshkosh Environmental Studies Program
Fall 2012

Instructor: Dr. Stephanie Spehar
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Office hours: Wed. 9:00-11:00 and Thurs 8:30-10:00 or by appointment
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Class meetings: TR 1:20-2:50 pm
Classroom: Swart 240

Course description

This course will introduce you to the amazing diversity of the order Primates and give you a foundation in the field of primate behavioral ecology and conservation. Primates are exceptionally social creatures, exhibiting a great deal of behavioral complexity and diversity, and they can provide us with a great deal of information about the evolutionary basis for behavioral patterns. Studying nonhuman primates, our closest living relatives, can also provide unique insights into human evolution and behavior.

This course takes an evolutionary approach, asking how behaviors allow primates to survive, reproduce, and succeed in the wild. Because an organisms' behavior is intimately connected to its ecology (how an organism interacts with its environment), we will use the theoretical framework of **behavioral ecology** to examine and understand primate behavioral patterns. After introducing the colorful members of the Primate order, we will examine primate ecology, investigating primate habitats, diets, and interactions with predators and their environments. We will then examine primate social behavior, including types of societies in which primates live, primate mating patterns, and primate social relationships. We will spend some time focusing on primate communication and cognition, particularly nonhuman primate social intelligence, tool use, and culture. Throughout, we will discuss what studies of primates can tell us about being human. As most nonhuman primates are threatened or endangered in the wild, we will also spend some time discussing primate conservation.

Specific objectives

As a result of participating in this class, students will:

1. Understand and appreciate the taxonomic and behavioral diversity of the living Primates
2. Develop a solid understanding of the evolutionary basis of behaviors, and, in particular, how the environment shapes behavior
3. Appreciate the close relationship between human beings and the nonhuman primates and how studying nonhuman primates can inform our understanding of the evolution of human behavior

4. Develop their ability to read, understand, and evaluate scientific literature, and to locate and synthesize information from primary, scholarly sources
5. Refine their ability to present clear arguments and communicate effectively in written and verbal form

Required text

Primate Behavioral Ecology, 4th Edition (2010), by Karen Strier. Pearson.

This book is available in the bookstore, and online through Amazon and other vendors. Additional readings will be available via Desire2Learn or electronic reserve.

Course requirements

Readings

You need to do the readings for this class in order to participate fully. A couple important points about readings for this class:

1. *You should complete the required readings for each class BEFORE coming to class.* As this class is heavily discussion-based, it is essential that students actually do the readings and come to class prepared. If I sense that students are not completing readings on time, I will begin to institute in-class or pre-class quizzes to ensure that students come to class prepared.
2. *Always bring the relevant book or copy of the readings to class with you.* If you have PDFs of the articles saved on your computer or other electronic device, you may bring them in that form. If you do not bring the readings with you, then you will not be able to participate fully in class discussions and activities, and your participation grade will suffer.

Attendance and participation

Attendance in this class is required, and a record of attendance will be kept and used in assessing your final grade. If you must miss a class, please try to inform me beforehand that you will be absent. If you cannot inform me beforehand, it is still a good idea to email or call me and let me know why you will be absent. *More than two unexcused absences for the semester will result in a lowering of your attendance score.* An “unexcused absence” is any absence for which you cannot provide a note from a doctor, another professor, or some other documented explanation of your absence. If you simply cannot make a class, please contact me before the class meets; perhaps an arrangement can be made to ensure that you are not penalized for missing class for legitimate reasons.

Participation in class will also be a very important part of your grade. Although I understand that some people are more comfortable than others speaking in front of groups, part of college is learning to formulate and express your ideas clearly to others, and to work through problems in a group setting. Therefore, I do expect participation in class, and I hope that we can create a class environment where everyone feels comfortable and safe participating. That said, participation will be evaluated in several ways: through your participation in larger class discussion but also through a variety of other means (e.g., contribution of questions for class discussion or other materials or ideas that I ask you to bring to class, group work, in-class assignments, etc.).

Participation grades will be given as follows:

A = participates often and meaningfully in class discussions; submits all discussion questions when requested

A- = participates a fair amount; submits almost all discussion questions

B = participates some; submits most discussion questions

B- = participates rarely; submits most discussion questions

C = in class but doesn't participate; submits some discussion questions

Your active participation in the class (and, by extension, your own learning) is the key to your success in this class, and to the success of this course as a whole.

Homework assignments

I ask students to choose and complete 6 out of 8 short homework assignments throughout this course. One of these is based on the field trip to the Milwaukee Zoo to see primates firsthand (marked on the course schedule). The other 7 will be assigned throughout the semester (the topics they will be based on are marked on the syllabus) and will constitute either sets of questions to be answered or a brief discussion paper on issues raised in course readings or lectures. Assignments will be announced in class and posted on D2L, and will be due 10 to 14 days after their assignment.

Article discussions

Groups of 3-4 students will be responsible for presenting and leading discussion on one scientific journal article during the semester. See the course schedule for the topics and dates of presentation. I will have students rank the topics they are most interested in, and then I will group students based on their interests.

Your grade for the discussion leadership will be based on how prepared you are for leading the discussion, how you handle it, and how well you and your partner(s) work together. Please see the **Article Discussion Guidelines** for more information on my expectations for this assignment.

For the article discussions that you don't lead, you are responsible for posting three discussion questions on D2L (in the Discussions section) about the article assigned for that discussion session. Also bring your questions to class (either electronically, on paper, or in your head). These questions should NOT be questions about details of the readings but big-picture questions that foster discussion. For example, do not ask, "what are the three most common foods eaten by spider monkeys?" but, "How do the spider monkeys' dietary choices influence their ranging behavior and activity patterns?" Your discussion questions will be graded based on their appropriateness and whether they indicate you read the article carefully.

Exams and quizzes

There will be one quiz, on Primate Traits & Taxonomy, which will be given early in the semester. This quiz will consist of multiple choice, fill in the blank, or short answer questions. There will also be two non-cumulative exams during the semester. These

exams will be a combination of multiple choice, short answer questions, and essay questions. I will always provide a review sheet before each exam.

Exams and quizzes are in-class. No make-up tests will be given, except under extreme circumstances. Please contact me ahead of time if at all possible if you know you will have to miss an exam. Make-up exams will be entirely in essay format.

Research project

Each student will be required to write a research paper of 12-15 pages in length (not including your bibliography) in this class. You can choose from two options for this paper:

1. The investigation and/or review of an issue in primate behavioral ecology (e.g., the influence of resource scarcity on behavior, juvenile development, infanticide, predation, female choice, theory of mind in primates- the list of possible topics is endless!).
2. A thorough review of the published information on the ecology and behavior of one particular primate species of your choice.

Your research project must be based on at least 15 sources other than the primary readings used in class. Of these sources, only one may be a website (which must be verified by me before it can be used); the other 14 must be *scholarly sources*. A *scholarly source* is a published work that has been subject to peer review, e.g., a book, a chapter in an edited volume, or a journal article (this can include journal articles found online). Other sources- such as websites, newspaper articles, or articles in popular magazines- must be reviewed by me first. I am happy to meet with you so I can help you locate information and plan your paper.

You are required to turn in a proposal for your research project and a preliminary annotated bibliography so I can ensure that you are on the right track in your research. You will also be required to submit a draft of your paper ~4 weeks BEFORE the final version is due. This draft will be graded, and returned to you; the grade you receive on the draft will be the grade you receive on the final paper unless you make the changes I request. Due dates are marked on the course schedule.

We will spend some time discussing this research project, including the nature of scholarly sources and how to find good sources, in class. Details on the format and expected content of the paper will also be distributed separately.

Other important points

1. Cell phones: Cell phone use is NOT permitted in my classroom. This is our time to focus on learning together, and distractions like cell phone use do not allow us to do this. If your cell phone goes off or you text during class, you will get one free pass; on the second offense, I will automatically deduct 20 points from your overall grade.
2. Laptops: you are more than welcome to use laptops in class to take notes, to examine course materials, or to complete in-class assignments, but you are NOT to use them

for any other purpose. If I see you using your laptop for anything other than these approved purposes, I will ask you to close your computer and I will not allow you to use it in class in the future.

3. As this is a class about nonhuman primates, many of which are endangered due to excessive resource use by humans, I prefer to save paper by having assignments turned in electronically in the dropbox on D2L whenever possible. If you must turn in a hard copy, consider printing on both sides of a sheet of paper, or even printed on scratch paper! Let's try to keep our resource use down.
4. Email and D2L: D2L is the central hub for our class- it is where assignments, readings, changes to the course schedule, etc. are posted. You are required to use it, and to check it regularly. If you have difficulty using D2L, please let me know ASAP and we can work through the problem or set up a training session for you. Email is also an official form of class business. This means I expect you to check your UW Oshkosh email account daily on the weekdays, and to read my emails as they are official class announcements. Email is also an excellent way to reach me, but remember that 1) you need to tell me who you are in the email and 2) don't expect me to respond right away on weekends or if I am away at a conference or over a break.
5. If you are late for an assignment and the D2L dropbox is closed, put your assignment in the "late assignments" dropbox. I WILL NOT ACCEPT ANY ASSIGNMENT VIA EMAIL. This is for both your and my protection- it is difficult for me to keep track of assignments if students email them to me! You should also know that assignments that go in the late dropbox go to the bottom of my grading priority list- so if you're late turning it in, it is likely your feedback will be late too. Additionally, all late submissions are subject to a 10 - 20% penalty, depending on how late they are.
6. The course schedule is a general guideline – we might go slower or faster depending on interest and engagement on various topics, or specific topics or assignments may change. You will always be notified of these changes in class and on D2L. You are responsible for any changes to the syllabus that are announced in class and/or are posted on D2L. Feel free to give feedback on the speed of the class or the choice of topics!

Grading

Your grade will be based on five components: quiz and exam scores, homework assignments, article discussions, a research paper, and participation and attendance.

Article discussion:	40
Leading discussion (22)	
Submitting questions (18)	
Homework assignments (20 each)	120
Quiz	25
Exams (100 each)	200
Research paper	100
Proposal (10)	
Preliminary bib (10)	
First draft (20)	
Final paper (60)	

Participation and attendance	50
TOTAL	535 pts

Semester grades will be based on your percentage of the total points possible in the class:

A = 93 - 100%	C = 73 - 77%
A- = 90 - 92%	C- = 70 - 72 %
B+ = 88 - 89%	D+ = 68 - 69%
B = 83 - 87%	D = 62 - 67%
B- = 80 - 82%	D- = 60 - 62
C+ = 78 - 79%	F = 0 - 59%

I reserve the right to lower one or more of these grade thresholds. Under no circumstance will I raise any of the thresholds.

Course schedule

I RECOMMEND THAT YOU REGULARLY CHECK THE COURSE SCHEDULE ON D2L FOR CHANGES, RATHER THAN RELYING ON A PRINTED SYLLABUS.

S = Primate Behavioral Ecology

Week	Day	Date	Topic	Reading
Introduction to the Primates				
1	Th	9/6	Introduction to course: What is primatology? Why study primates?	S: Chp 1 “The Ape’s Gift” (in-class)
2	Tu	9/11	Introduction to the Primate Order: Traits and Trends Film excerpts: <i>A Life in the Trees</i>	S: Chp 2, pp 30-40 Chp 3, pp 59-70
	Th	9/13	Introduction to the Primate Order: Taxonomy	S: Chp 2, pp 40-58 Chp 3, pp 70-79 HW1: Primate traits and taxonomy
	Sat	9/15	FIELD TRIP: Milwaukee Zoo	HW2: Zoo assignment
3	Tu	9/18	Introduction to Primate Diversity: Prosimians & NW Monkeys	S: Reread Chp 2, pp 40-48 Review at least one prosimian and one NW monkey on the Primate Info Net website, and bring review to class
	Th	9/20	Introduction to Primate Diversity: Old World Monkeys and Apes	S: Reread Chp 2, pp 48-55, Chp 3, pp 70-79 “Gorillas Without Borders” HW3: Diversity, species, and classification
4	Tu	9/25	Theoretical frameworks for studying primates: Evolutionary theory and behavioral ecology Film excerpts: <i>Evolution: Darwin’s</i>	S: Reread Chp. 1, pp 19-22 Chp 4, 80-89 “Evolution in Action”

			<i>Dangerous Idea</i>	
	Th	9/27	Theoretical frameworks for studying primates: Genes, the environment, and behavior	S: Chp 4, pp 89-98 “The Nature of Nurture” “A Gene for Nothing” HW4: Theoretical foundations
5	Tu	10/2	Quiz 1: Primate Traits and Taxonomy Why the heck am I doing this again? Or, the rigors of primate fieldwork	Quiz 1 study guide “In the Field”
Primate Ecology: Primates in Their Environments				
	Th	10/4	Diets and foraging strategies	S: Chp. 6 “Poison in the Monkey’s Garden of Eden” “Diet for a Small Primate”
6	Tu	10/9	Community ecology I: Primate communities and the ecological niche	S: Chp 11, pp 269-277 “Night Watch on the Amazon” Bshary & Noe 1997. Red colobus and Diana monkeys provide mutual protection against predators. (A1)
	Th	10/11	Community ecology II: Predator-prey interactions and seed dispersal	S: Chp 11, 277-286 “To Catch a Colobus” “The Vervets’ Year of Doom” Gutierrez-Granados & Dirzo 2010. Indirect effects of timber extraction on plant recruitment and diversity via reductions in abundance

				of frugivorous spider monkeys. (A2) HW5: Community ecology
Primate social systems: What types of groups do primates live in? Why?				
7	Tu	10/16	Independent work on research project DUE: Research project proposal	
	Th	10/18	Ecology and Social Systems	S: Chp 7 pp 168-173, Chp 8 pp 196-202 "You Are What You Eat" Mitchell et al. 1991 Competitive regimes and female bonding in two species of squirrel monkeys (<i>Saimiri oerstedii</i> and <i>S. sciureus</i>) (A3)
8	Tu	10/23	Sex and Social Systems I: Sexual selection and mating patterns Film clips: <i>Evolution: What about sex?</i>	S: Chp 5 pp 113-119 "The Handmaid's Tale"
	Th	10/25	Sex and Social Systems II: Mating patterns	S: Chp 5 pp 119-136 "Gorilla Society" "Family Feuds" HW6: Ecology, sex, and social systems
9	Tu	10/30	Sex and Social Systems III: Female reproductive strategies DUE: Preliminary bibliography	S: Chp 5 pp 136-141 Stumpf & Boesch 2005. Does promiscuous mating preclude female choice? Digby 1995. Infant care, infanticide, and female

				reproductive strategies in polygynous groups of common marmosets (<i>Callithrix jacchus</i>). (A4)
	Th	11/1	Sex and Social Systems IV: Male reproductive strategies	S: Chp 5 pp 141-144 “The Infanticide Wars” Utami et al 2002. Male bimaturism and reproductive success in Sumatran orangutans. (A5)
10	Tu	11/6	Exam 1: Primate social systems	Exam 1 Study Guide
Group life: Individual strategies and relationships within social systems				
	Th	11/8	Social life: Cooperation and altruism vs. conflict and competition	S: Chp 4, pp 121-140 “Survival of the Kindest” “How Animals Do Business”
11	Tu	11/13	Social strategies and social relationships I	S: Chp 7, 173-195 “Ms. Monkey” Silk et al. (2010). Female chacma baboons form strong, equitable, and enduring social bonds. (A6)
	Th	11/15	Social strategies and social relationships II Film: <i>Murder in the Troop</i>	S: Chp 8 Guiding questions
12	Tu	11/20	Social strategies and social relationships III: Human implications? Film excerpts: <i>Social Climbers</i>	“What Are Friends For?” “Apes of Wrath” HW7: Social relationships
	Th	11/22	THANKSGIVING BREAK DUE: Research paper draft	

Primate Communication, Cognition, and Conservation				
13	Tu	11/27	Primate communication	S: Chp 10, pp 243-258 “The Silliest Debate” Article about primate communication (A7)
	Th	11/29	Cognition I: Why are primates so smart?	S: Chp 10, pp 319-332 “Why Are Some Animals So Smart?” “In the Minds of Monkeys”
14	Tu	12/4	Cognition II: How smart are they, anyway? Film: <i>Clever Monkeys</i>	“Are We in Anthropodenial?” “Tools of Deceit” HW8: Cognition
	Th	12/6	Primate Conservation	S: Chp 12 “The Perils of Primates”
15	Tu	12/11	Exam 2: The social and mental lives of primates	Exam 2 Study Guide
	Th	12/13	DUE: Final version of research paper	