

**Anth 370: Primate Behavior and Ecology**  
**UW Oshkosh Department of Anthropology**

**Instructor:** Dr. Stephanie Spehar  
**Office:** Arts & Communication 311  
**Office Hours:** Tues. 10-12 am, Wed. 3:30-4:00 pm  
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**Class meetings:** MWF 1:50-2:50 pm

**Classroom:** Swart 302

**Course description**

This course is designed to introduce students to the amazing diversity of the primate order, and to give students 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. 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, we will use the theoretical framework of behavioral ecology to examine and understand primate behavioral patterns. We will first examine primate ecology, investigating primate habitats, diets, activity patterns, and interactions with predators and their environments. We will then examine primate social behavior, including mating systems and reproductive strategies, social relationships, and the types of societies in which primates live. We will especially focus on primate communication and cognition, including issues such as nonhuman primate tool use and culture. As most nonhuman primates are threatened or endangered in the wild, we will also spend some time discussing primate conservation. Throughout, we will discuss what studies of nonhuman primates can teach us about the evolution of human behavior and biology.

I hope that students will leave this class with a newfound appreciation of our closest living relatives, the fascinating nonhuman primates, and through this, a greater understanding of what it means to be human. I also hope that students acquire a solid understanding of how evolutionary forces shape behavioral patterns, and, in particular, how ecology and the environment influence behavior.

**Required Texts**

*Primate Behavioral Ecology*, 3rd Edition (2007), by Karen Strier. Allyn & Bacon.

*The Primate Anthology: Essays on Primate Behavior, Ecology, and Conservation from Natural History* (1998), Russell Ciochon and Richard Nisbett, Eds. Prentice Hall.

These books are available in the bookstore. Additional readings will be available via Desire2Learn or electronic reserve.

You should complete the required readings for each class before coming to class.

## **Course requirements and grading**

Your grade will be based on four components: exam and quiz scores, a field trip assignment, a research paper, and class participation and attendance.

Taxonomy Quiz	5%
Exams (2)	50%
Research Paper	20%
Field trip assignment	10%
Class participation	15%

### Exams and quizzes

There will be one quiz, on Primate Taxonomy, which will be given before the midterm. There will also be two non-cumulative exams. Both will be a combination of short answer and essay questions.

Exams and quizzes are in-class. No make-up exams will be given, except under extreme circumstances.

### Research paper

A research paper will be due on the last day of class. The paper should review published information on the ecology and behavior of one particular primate species of your choice. This research paper will involve a literature search and critique of the most recent primary sources (I will provide a list of possible sources for you). The completed paper will contain six sections about the chosen species of primate (habitat, diet, social structure, mating system, kinship and/or dominance relationships, and communication) and a final section drawing conclusions about how its observed patterns of social organization in the wild may be related to features of its ecology. You will submit initial paper sections throughout the semester; I will look these over and give comments, so you have the opportunity to revise before submitting the final paper. 5% of your research paper grade will depend on timely submission of these initial sections. Each of these sections will be about a page in length, with a final length, including bibliography, of about 13-15 pages. You will also be required to give a class presentation (~15 min) on your chosen species at the end of the semester. This presentation must include some kind of visual aid (e.g., Powerpoint, overheads, handouts, etc.). I am happy to meet with you so I can help you locate information and plan your paper or presentation. The internet can only be used as a reference if I first verify the web site.

### Class field trip

Near the beginning of class, I will lead a field trip to the Milwaukee Zoo to see primates firsthand! There will be a short assignment on primate taxonomy and behavior associated with this field trip.

### Class attendance and participation

You are expected to attend every class meeting; please notify me in advance if you cannot make it to class. We will also participate in several class seminars and group discussions throughout the semester, focused on particular topics; I will assign references and sources as appropriate. I will sometimes choose a group of students to lead discussion on these readings. All students are expected to come prepared. We will also participate in informal discussions in other classes; you should make sure you are up-to-date on the readings so you can participate fully.

### Changes to the syllabus and course schedule

I will do my very best to adhere to the syllabus and course schedule; however, I reserve the right to change topic, dates, readings, etc. due to unforeseen circumstances! You will always be notified of these changes in class or in an announcement on D2L. You are responsible for any changes to the syllabus or course schedule that are announced in class or are posted on D2L.

### Class schedule

Note: Readings for specific classes may change or be added, and these changes will be reflected in the syllabus on D2L. Always check before coming to class!

KS= Primate Behavioral Ecology

PA=The Primate Anthology

Week	Day	Date	Topic	Reading
1	Wed	9/5	Introduction to Course: What is primatology? Why study primates?	
	Fri	9/7	What's a primate? Traits and trends	KS, Chp. 2, pp 37-50
2	Mon	9/10	Primate Taxonomy, Distribution, and Habitats I	KS, Chp. 2 pp 50-72 PA, "The Perils of Primates"
	Wed	9/12	Primate Taxonomy, Distribution, and Habitats II	
	Fri	9/14	Overview of the Primate Order: Prosimians and New World Monkeys	PA, "Lemurs Lost and Found" and "Scarlet Faces of the Amazon"
	Sat	9/15	<b>FIELD TRIP: Milwaukee Zoo</b>	Zoo assignment
3	Mon	9/17	Overview of the Primate Order: Old World Monkeys and Apes	
	Wed	9/19	Video: <i>Life in the Trees</i>	Guiding questions
	Fri	9/21	How do we study primates? Evolutionary Theory, Ecology, and Ethology I	KS, Chp. 1, Chp. 3 pp 87-98, Chp. 4 pp 99-121

4	Mon	9/24	Evolutionary Theory, Ecology, and Ethology II Class seminar: What is a species?	Jolly 2001, “Species, Subspecies, and Baboon Systematics”
	Wed	9/26	<b>Primate Taxonomy Quiz</b> Catchup and paper research <b>Due: Choice of research species</b>	
	Fri	9/28	You are what you eat I: Diets and foraging strategies	KS, Chp. 6
5	Mon	10/1	You are what you eat II	PA, “Diet for a Small Primate,” “Poison in the Monkey’s Garden of Eden,” and “Menu for a Monkey”
	Wed	10/3	Community ecology I: The ecological niche	KS, Chp. 11
	Fri	10/5	Community Ecology II: Polyspecific associations	PA, “Capuchin Counterpoint,” “Night Watch in the Amazon,” and “The Kindness of Strangers”
6	Mon	10/8	Community ecology III: Primates as Prey and Predators	PA, “The Vervets’ Year of Doom,” “To Catch a Colobus”
	Wed	10/10	Ecology and Social Organization I: Females and Food <b>DUE: Habitat section</b>	KS, Chp 6 pp 194-208, Chp 7 pp 209-215
	Fri	10/12	Ecology and Social Organization II: Males and Females	KS, Chp. 8 pp 243-251
7	Mon	10/15	Ecology and Social Organization III: Class seminar: How does ecology shape social systems?	van Schaik 1983 Sterck et al 1997 Mitchell et al 1991

	Wed	10/17	Review	Review sheet
	Fri	10/19	<b>Exam 1</b>	
8	Mon	10/22	Evolution and Reproduction I: Female reproductive physiology and sexual selection	KS, Chp 5 pp 141-148
	Wed	10/24	Evolution and Reproduction II: Mating systems <b>DUE: Diet section</b>	KS, Chp 5 pp 148-168
	Fri	10/26	Evolution and Reproduction III: Mating systems	Pochron & Wright 2005, "Dance of the Sexes"
9	Mon	10/29	Evolution and Reproduction V: Male and female reproductive strategies	Chp 5 pp 168-178 PA, "Monkeys With Inflated Sex Appeal" Small 1992, "What's Love Got to Do With It?"
	Wed	10/31	Class seminar: Infanticide <b>DUE: Social structure section</b>	PA, "Family Feuds"
	Fri	11/2	Group life: Cooperation, Kinship, and Altruism I	KS, Chp 4, pp 121-140
10	Mon	11/5	Group life: Cooperation, Kinship, and Altruism II	De Waal 2005, "How Animals Do Business"
	Wed	11/7	Group life: Competition, dominance, and rank <b>DUE: Mating system section</b>	KS, Chp 7, 215-242 KS, Chp 8, 251-272
	Fri	11/9	Video: <i>Social Climbers</i>	Guiding questions
11	Mon	11/12	Class seminar: Female and male strategies	PA, "What Are Friends For?," "Ms. Monkey," "Apes of Wrath"

	Wed	11/14	Communication I <b>DUE: Kinship/dominance relationship section</b>	KS, Chp 10 pp 301-319
	Fri	11/16	Communication II: Ape language studies	Anderson 2004, "A Telling Difference"
12	Mon	11/19	Cognition I: The Evolution of Intelligence	KS Chp 10 pp 319-332 van Schaik 2006, "Why Are Some Animals So Smart?"
	Wed	11/21	THANKSGIVING BREAK	
	Fri	11/23	THANKSGIVING BREAK	
13	Mon	11/26	Cognition II: Theory of Mind, Social Intelligence, and Deception <b>DUE: Communication section</b>	PA, "In the Minds of Monkeys" Hauser 2000, "Tools of Deceit"
	Wed	11/28	Video: <i>The New Chimpanzees</i>	Guiding questions
	Fri	11/30	Class seminar: Nonhuman primate culture	PA, "Dim Forest, Bright Chimps" Stanford 2001, "Got Culture?"
14	Mon	12/3	Conservation I	KS, Chp 12
	Wed	12/5	Conservation II Working groups: Solving conservation problems	TBA
	Fri	12/7	Presentations: Research papers	
15	Mon	12/10	Presentations: Research papers	
	Wed	12/12	Review	Review sheet
	Fri	12/14	<b>Exam 2</b> <b>DUE: Final draft of research papers</b>	