

# **Evolutionary Psychology**

PSYC 358, Sections 001 and 002

(2015-2016 Academic Year, Term 1)

**Course website:** <http://www2.psych.ubc.ca/~schaller/psyc358.htm>

**Section 001:** Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30 – 11:00  
Swing Space Building 221

**Section 002:** Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00 – 3:30  
Forest Sciences Centre 1005

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**Office hours:** Wednesdays 1:30 - 2:30, and by appointment

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## **Required Texts:**

Dawkins, R. (1976). *The selfish gene*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

(This book should be available for purchase in the UBC bookstore. There are various editions of this book. For this course, it doesn't matter which edition you read; we will cover material common to all editions.)

Buss, D. M. (2015). *Evolutionary psychology: The new science of the mind* (5<sup>th</sup> Edition). Boston: Pearson.

(This book should be available for purchase in the UBC bookstore. There exist earlier editions of this book and they all differ somewhat in terms of their actual content. I expect you to read the most current edition, which I've identified here.)

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## **Course Objectives and Overview:**

Evolutionary psychology is a broad approach to scientific inquiry, in which the knowledge and principles from evolutionary biology are applied to the study of human psychological processes and their implications for human behavior. This course is designed to provide you with a good overview of the basic themes of inquiry within evolutionary psychology, and an overview of important programs of research within evolutionary psychology. By the end of the course, you

should understand how evolutionary thinking can be productively applied within the psychological sciences, you should be familiar with the conceptual and methodological issues that arise when evolutionary principles are applied to the study contemporary human behavior, and you should know a wide variety of psychological theories and psychological phenomena that have emerged within the framework of evolutionary psychology.

This is a big class, and I will present a lot of material in a lecture format. But please don't let that keep you from thinking: I'll try as best as I can to keep you alert and mentally active in class. Please feel free to ask questions and/or make cogent comments during class.

The material that appears in the readings and the material that I present in class are designed to be complementary. There will be some overlap, of course. But there is lots of material in the readings that we won't have time to talk about in class; and I will present lots of material in class that doesn't appear in the readings. If you want to do well in this class, be sure to keep up with the readings, and be sure to come to class.

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**Exams:**

There will be three exams, and they all count equally toward your final course grade. The dates of the exams are specified below, in the "Calendar of Events."

Each exam will consist of two parts: (a) A set of multiple-choice and short-answer questions; and (b) a short take-home essay assignment that will be due on the day of the exam.

The exams are *not* designed in any explicit way to be cumulative; each exam will focus on "new" material presented in readings and lectures since any previous exam. (Of course, a lot of "new" material builds upon older material, and your comprehension of new material will be increased if you have retained your knowledge of that older material.)

Exams won't be handed back to you. Students at UBC have the right to view their marked examinations with their instructor, providing they apply to do so within a month of receiving their final grades. This review is for pedagogic purposes. The examination remains the property of the university.

Students who miss an exam will receive a mark of "0" for that exam. You will not be allowed to take a make-up an exam unless you have written documentation from a health professional attesting to a valid health-related reason for missing the scheduled exam.

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**Scaling of Grades:**

Grades will be scaled in order to maintain equity among sections and to conform to University, Faculty, or Department grading norms. In accordance with the policy of the Psychology Department, the expectation is that the grades in this course (as in all 300-level courses) will be normally distributed around an average grade of approximately 68 (i.e., right around a C+ or B-).

Let me explain what this is all about. The primary function of grades is to inform you (and other people) as to your performance *relative* to other students taking the course. In order for grades to serve this function, it's important that average performance is reflected in an average grade, that better-than-average-but-not-great performance is reflected in a better-than-average-but-not-great grade, and so forth. The Faculty of Arts has guidelines for appropriate distributions of grades in courses at all levels. This is something we really pay attention to in the Psychology Department – especially in courses for which there are multiple sections.

Let me make this point in a slightly different way. Don't be fooled by the fact that UBC records numerical grades on a 100-point scale. These numerical grades *aren't* really percentages. They are simply a numerical translation of letter grades. Again: The purpose of your final course grade is to reflect your performance in this course *relative* to the other students taking the course. If your performance is right in the middle of the overall grade distribution, then you'll get an average grade (a C+ or B-). If most students in class perform better than you, you'll get a low grade (in the low C's, or D's or – if you're way at the bottom of the grade distribution – an F). If you perform better than average, then you'll get a better-than-average grade (e.g., a B perhaps). And if you perform way better than average (e.g., if your performance is among the top 15% of students in the entire class) then you may get an A.

So, please remember that, for this course, the average final grade will be around a C+ or B-, and that grades will be normally distributed around that mean. I will scale the grades to ensure that the distribution of final grades in this class meets these guidelines.

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### **Special Accommodations:**

UBC accommodates students with disabilities who have registered with UBC's office of [Access and Diversity](#). If you have a disability that may affect your performance in this class, please make sure you have contacted the Access and Diversity office to arrange for accommodations. Please let me know of these accommodations as soon as possible.

UBC also accommodates students whose religious obligations conflict with attendance, assignments, or examinations. Please let me know as soon as possible – and well in advance of any assignment or examination – if you will require any accommodation on these grounds.

The university does not have any formal policy on accommodating students who plan to be absent for varsity athletics, family obligations, or other similar commitments. So, please do not assume that you will get special accommodations for these sorts of absences. It is your responsibility to ensure that you meet the course requirements as scheduled. If you do plan to be absent during any time an examination is scheduled, please discuss this with me as soon as possible.

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**Class conduct:**

Please show respect for everyone else in class. Show up on time and please don't leave early, because comings and goings during class are very disruptive. Make sure cellphones and other distracting electronic stuff are turned off before you come to class. And please don't chatter when I'm lecturing or if someone else is talking. I do want you to actively participate in the class – to ask questions and make comments – but please do so in respectful way.

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**Academic Dishonesty:**

Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic misconduct are very serious concerns of the University, and the Department of Psychology has taken steps to alleviate them. The Department has implemented software that can reliably detect cheating on multiple-choice exams by analyzing the patterns of students' responses. The Department also subscribes to *TurnItIn* – a service designed to detect and deter plagiarism. All materials that students submit for grading will be scanned and compared to over 4.5 billion pages of content located on the Internet or in TurnItIn's own proprietary databases. The results of these comparisons are compiled into customized "Originality Reports" containing several, sensitive measures of plagiarism; instructors receive copies of these reports for every student in their class. In all cases of suspected academic misconduct, the parties involved will be pursued to the fullest extent dictated by the guidelines of the University. Strong evidence of cheating or plagiarism may result in a zero credit for the work in question. According to the University Act (section 61), the President of UBC has the right to impose harsher penalties including (but not limited to) a failing grade for the course, suspension from the University, cancellation of scholarships, or a notation added to a student's transcript.

All graded work in this course, unless otherwise specified, is to be original work done independently by individuals. If you have any questions as to whether or not what you are doing is even a borderline case of academic misconduct, please consult your instructor. For details on University policies and procedures pertaining to student conduct and academic dishonesty, please see [the UBC Calendar](#).

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**Other Stuff:**

This syllabus is our roadmap for the course, but it is possible that some revisions (in scheduling, in policy, etc.) may have to be made as we work our way through the material. Any announcements made in class "count" just as much as policies outlined in this written syllabus.

Further information about academic regulations, course withdrawal dates and credits can be found in the [University Calendar](#). If you run into trouble and need information about studying, preparing for exams, note-taking or time-management, free workshops and advice are available from the Student Resources Center.

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## **Calendar of Events:**

Following is an overview of the structure of the course, along with a list of the dates on which we will have classes. For each class, I've indicated exactly what material you should have completed reading by that date.

Introduction to the course

September 8: [Class cancelled]

September 10: No readings required

Part 1: Gene's-eye view of Human Psychology

September 15: Buss, chapters 1 and 2

September 17: Dawkins, chapters 1 and 2

September 22: Dawkins, chapter 3

September 24: Dawkins, chapter 4

September 29: Dawkins, chapter 5

October 1: Dawkins, chapters 6 and 8

October 6: EXAM 1

Part 2: Psychological Adaptations to the Challenges of Survival and Sexual Reproduction

October 8: No new readings required

October 13: Buss, chapter 3

October 15: Buss, chapter 3

October 20: Dawkins, chapter 9

October 22: Buss, chapters 4 and 5

October 27: Buss, chapters 4 and 5

October 29: Buss, chapter 6

November 3: EXAM 2

Part 3: Other Challenges, Other Adaptations, Other Implications

November 5: [Class cancelled]

November 10: Buss, chapter 7

November 12: Buss, chapter 8

November 17: Dawkins, chapter 10; Buss, chapter 9

November 19: Buss, chapter 10

November 24: Buss, chapters 11 and 12

November 26: Buss, chapter 13

December 1: No new readings required

December 3: EXAM 3