LDST 306/BIOL 351: Sex, Leadership, and the Evolution of Human Societies

FALL 2017

COURSE TIME AND LOCATION: Mon, Wed 3:00-4:15, Jepson 108
CLASS WEBSITE: https://blackboard.richmond.edu

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Chris von Rueden
EMAIL: cvonrued@richmond.edu
OFFICE: Jepson 235
OFFICE HOURS: Wed 4:15pm-6:15pm & by appointment

Course Description:
In this course, we will study how biological and cultural adaptation shape leadership and, more broadly, political organization. Through case studies drawn from primatology, cultural anthropology, and political history, students will learn about what makes human leadership unique and investigate why leadership and political organization vary across human and non-human societies. Some of the questions we consider include: Why do animals adopt leader and follower roles at all? What is the political organization of other social animals, particularly other great apes? How does reproductive biology influence political organization? Are there any human societies that lack leadership? Are there societies in which, on average, women wield more power than men? Why are some human societies more hierarchical than others? The goal of the course is not only to expose students to the diversity of political organization in humans and other animals but also to stimulate them to think critically about the ultimate causes of human social behavior in general.

Readings:
The readings for this course consist of a mix of research articles and more popular journal articles or opinion pieces (see Reading List below). All of the readings will be available through BlackBoard. In addition, three books are assigned for this course and are available for purchase at the UR bookstore:

How you will be graded:

1. Discussion (15% of grade)

The format of the class is a mixture of lecture and open discussion about the readings. You must come prepared to class with questions and comments, having carefully read what is assigned for that class (see Reading List below). In addition, a student will be assigned as discussion leader for each reading; the discussion leader will summarize the main points of the reading for the class (2.5 minutes) and then critique the reading and connect it to the broader themes of the course (2.5 minutes). I encourage you to contact me before you are due to present if you need help, though I don’t expect you to be an expert on the reading. Raising questions for the class is as important as drawing your classmates’ attention to the specifics of the readings. Students should not be timid and all students are expected to contribute to each class discussion. Attendance and lateness are also factored into your discussion grade. *I ask that you not leave during class-time unless you are in physical discomfort. Use the bathrooms before you arrive to class.*

2. Reaction Papers (15% of grade)

You need to write a reaction to a minimum of 15 assignments (whether articles or book chapters), throughout the semester. These should be critical evaluations as well as summaries of the main points of the readings. Reaction papers will be graded as check minus, check, or check plus. You will receive a check or check minus if you simply summarize or if it appears you didn’t complete the reading. These are not formal writing assignments, but informal opportunities for you to organize your thoughts, pose questions, raise criticisms, and develop ideas in response to the readings, in preparation for class discussion, the exams, and your final paper. These papers do not need to be time-consuming; I won’t grade for grammar or spelling and you may write in note-form.

It is up to you to decide for which of the readings you will turn in reaction papers. Reaction papers should be turned in at the start of the class during which we are scheduled to discuss the particular reading. The reaction paper should be roughly 1 page long (typed, double spaced, 12-point font, 1 inch margins). You must include your name and the title of the reading and use staples if you are turning in more than one page.

3. Midterm Exam (20% of grade)

The midterm exam will consist of multiple choice and short answer questions having you compare and contrast positions taken by authors we’ve read and material presented in lecture.

4. Final Paper (20% of grade)
Throughout the course you will work in groups of 3 to research the political organization of a particular human society (details to be provided in class). In the final paper, which you write jointly with your group members, you present the results of your research. You must develop a clear argument for the paper that is based on theory we’ve discussed in class. The paper should include a minimum of 10 pages of text (double spaced, 12-point font) and structured into four sections: Introduction, in which you present your argument; Body, in which you defend your argument with literature from class and from your own research; Conclusion, in which you restate your argument and situate it within the broader context of the course; References, in which you list your cited articles. Wikipedia and non-scholarly websites are not valid bibliographic sources for papers written in this class. I will grade the paper according to the following criteria: (1) clear and interesting thesis; (2) sustained and well-organized defense of the thesis; (3) unambiguous writing; (4) incorporation of class readings and own research; (5) accurate use and proper citing of sources. In addition to the paper, your group will deliver a 15 minute presentation to the class on your research during the final class period. I encourage you to be as creative as you like for your presentation, e.g. incorporating culture-specific cuisine, song, interpretive dance, etc.

5. Final Exam (30% of grade)

The final exam will consist of multiple choice and short answer questions having you compare and contrast positions taken by authors we’ve read and material presented in lecture. The final exam is cumulative but will emphasize the latter half of the course.

Notes:

1. To be successful in this course, a student should expect to devote 10 hours each week, including class time and time spent on course-related activities.
   registrar.richmond.edu/services/policies/academic-credit.html

2. Students should notify me within the first two weeks of classes if they will need accommodations for religious observance.
   registrar.richmond.edu/planning/religiousobs.html

3. Students with a Disability Accommodation Notice should contact me as early in the semester as possible to discuss arrangements for completing course assignments and exams.
   disability.richmond.edu

4. Reaction papers may be turned in late but they will be docked a grade (e.g. from a check plus to a check). If the final paper is turned in late, it will be docked 10 percentage points for each day late. I will waive the late penalty only under exceptional circumstances, e.g. a major illness with a doctor’s note, or a family emergency with a note from the Dean. The same requirements apply for rescheduling the midterm or final exam.
5. Students should be aware of University policies on plagiarism. Plagiarism in any form can result in failing the class or even expulsion. See the following link for advice on avoiding plagiarism.

http://writing2.richmond.edu/writing/wweb/english/plagiarism.html

6. Be aware of the provisions of the Honor System: “I pledge that I have neither received nor given unauthorized assistance during the completion of this work.” I will require you to write this statement on your final paper and tests.

studentdevelopment.richmond.edu/student-handbook/honor/the-honor-code.html

7. During class time, no phones are allowed. Laptops may be used for class-related work, such as referencing the assigned articles or taking notes, but if you use laptops for non-class related work you will lose your ability to use a laptop during class.

8. If you ever have questions outside of class, I encourage you to drop by my office. Outside of office hours, it is best to set up an appointment via email to ensure I am in my office when you come by. I’m eager to help students but you must take the initiative to meet with me.

**Campus Resources:**

If you experience difficulties in this course, do not hesitate to consult with me. There are also other resources that can support you in your efforts to meet course requirements.

**Academic Skills Center** (http://asc.richmond.edu, 289-8626 or 289-8956): Assists students in assessing their academic strengths and weaknesses; honing their academic skills through teaching effective test preparation, critical reading and thinking, information conceptualization, concentration, and related techniques; working on specific subject areas (e.g., calculus, chemistry, accounting, etc.); and encouraging campus and community involvement.

**Career Services** (http://careerservices.richmond.edu/ or 289-8547): Can assist you in exploring your interests and abilities, choosing a major or course of study, connecting with internships and jobs, and investigating graduate and professional school options. We encourage you to schedule an appointment with a career advisor early in your time at UR.

**Counseling and Psychological Services** (http://wellness.richmond.edu/offices/caps/ or 289-8119): Assists currently enrolled, full-time, degree-seeking students in improving their mental health and well-being, and in handling challenges that may impede their growth and development. Services include short-term counseling and psychotherapy, crisis intervention, psychiatric consultation, and related services.

**Speech Center** (http://speech.richmond.edu or 289-6409): Assists with preparation and practice in the pursuit of excellence in public expression. Recording, playback, coaching and critique sessions offered by teams of student consultants trained to assist in developing ideas, arranging key points for more effective organization, improving style and delivery, and handling multimedia aids for individual and group presentations.
Writing Center ([http://writing.richmond.edu](http://writing.richmond.edu) or 289-8263): Assists writers at all levels of experience, across all majors. Students can schedule appointments with trained writing consultants who offer friendly critiques of written work.

Boatwright Library Research Librarians ([http://library.richmond.edu/help/ask/](http://library.richmond.edu/help/ask/) or 289-8876): Research librarians assist students with identifying and locating resources for class assignments, research papers and other course projects. Librarians also provide research support for students and can respond to questions about evaluating and citing sources. Students can email, text or IM or schedule a personal research appointment to meet with a librarian in his/her office on the first floor Research and Collaborative Study area.

**Class Schedule and Reading Assignments**

**Aug 28**  
**Introductions**

**Aug 30**  
**Do Humans Have a ‘Nature’?**

- Nettle, D. (2017). What we talk about when we talk about biology. 1

**Sep 4**  
**Evolution of Cooperation**

- Play game at: [http://ncase.me/trust/](http://ncase.me/trust/)

**Sep 6**  
**Evolution of Cooperation (cont.)**


**Sep 11**  
**Multi-Level Human Societies**


**Sep 13**  
**Multi-Level Human Societies (cont.)**

**Sep 18**  
**In-group Love and Out-group Hate**


**Sep 20**  
**Hierarchy and Leadership**


**Sep 25**  
**Gender and Leadership**


**Sep 27**  
**Egalitarian Societies**


**Oct 2**  
**Egalitarian Societies (cont.)**


**Oct 4**  
**Egalitarian Societies (cont.)**

Oct 9  **Transitions to More Centralized Leadership**

Oct 11  **MIDTERM**

Oct 16  **No Class (Fall Study Break)**

Oct 18  **Film: Ongka’s Big Moka**

Oct 23  **Transitions to More Centralized Leadership: Theory**

Oct 25  **Transitions to More Centralized Leadership: Case Studies**

Oct 30  **Transitions to More Centralized Leadership: Case Studies (cont.)**

Nov 1  **Cultural Evolution of States**
- Turchin, P. (2016). Chapters 1 and 4. 7

Nov 6  **War as a Driver of Cultural Evolution**
- Turchin, P. (2016). Chapter 6. 8
- Turchin, P. (2016). Chapter 7. 9

Nov 8  **War as a Driver of Cultural Evolution (cont.)**
- Turchin, P. (2016). Chapter 8. 10
Nov 13  The Rise and Fall of States: China and the Pacific Islands


Nov 15  Institutions: Religion


Nov 20  Institutions: Laws and Recordkeeping


Nov 22  No Class (Thanksgiving)

Nov 27  Institutions: Marriage and Inheritance


Nov 29  Is Democracy Best?


Dec 4  The Future

- Norberg, J. (2016, August 20). Why can’t we see that we’re living in a golden age? *The Spectator*: https://www.spectator.co.uk/2016/08/why-cant-we-see-that-were-living-in-a-golden-age/
• Battersby, S. (2017). Can humankind escape the tragedy of the commons? 
  Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 114, 7-10.
  https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2017/08/170811185455.htm

Dec 6  In-Class Presentations
Dec 8  FINAL PAPER due (by 5pm, in my mailbox or at my office)
Dec 11 FINAL EXAM (9am-12pm)