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

SPRING 2019

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: Thu 10am-12pm & by appointment

Course Description:
In this course, we will study how biological and cultural adaptation shape leadership and, more broadly, political organization over human history. Through case studies drawn from primatology and cultural anthropology, 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, two books are assigned for this course and are available for purchase at the UR bookstore:


How you will be graded:
1. Reaction Papers (15% of grade)

You need to write a reaction to 15 readings throughout the semester. Reaction papers will be graded on a check, check minus basis. You will receive a check if you include the following: (1) 2-3 questions you have about the reading and (2) comparison to our other readings. Reaction papers that do not include these components will receive a check minus. Reaction papers should be submitted on Blackboard, before the class during which we’ll discuss the particular reading. Each reaction paper should be roughly a page in length (typed, double spaced, 12-point font). You must include your name and the title of the reading. It is up to you to decide for which of the readings you will turn in reaction papers (except when you are assigned to present on the reading—see next section). These papers do not need to be time-consuming; I am not grading you on grammar and you may write them in note-form.

2. Discussion (15% of grade)

The format of the class combines lecture with group discussion of the readings. I will identify the main points of the reading, in part by calling on you all (so come to class with questions and prepared to discuss even if you didn’t complete a reaction paper!). Many of the articles we read describe statistical results that I will help you interpret, but you should be able to understand the main points of the readings regardless of your statistical competence. Then one student will present their reaction paper to the class (~5 minutes). During your presentation, you should read your questions to the class to solicit their answers, in addition to sharing the other components of your reaction paper. Each student will present twice during the course, according to your assigned number (see reading list below). You can contact me before you are due to present if you want guidance, but remember neither your reaction papers nor your presentations on them require you to accurately summarize the readings. So don’t feel like you need to be an expert. Extra credit: presenters can craft a haiku about the reading to read to the class.

All students are expected to discuss each reading, whether you present or not. I will not grade the presentations per se but they will factor into your discussion grade. Your reaction paper presentations, general contribution to discussion, and your attendance/lateness will comprise 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.

3. Midterm Exam (25% 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 second half of 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. I will also ask you to submit a peer review of your fellow group members.

5. Final Exam (25% 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 10-14 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 (from a check to a check minus). 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 as you work on assignments (including the reaction papers) and study for the exams: “I pledge that I have neither received nor given unauthorized assistance during the completion of this work.”

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

7. During class time, no phones or computers are allowed. You may only use a computer if you have special permission to use for note-taking.

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:

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 processing, concentration, and related techniques; working on specific subject areas (e.g., calculus, chemistry, accounting, etc.); and encouraging campus and community involvement. Hours at the Center are: Sunday through Wednesday 3:00-9:00 p.m. and Thursday 3:00-7:00 p.m. On-call tutors are also available.

Career Services (http://careerservices.richmond.edu/ or 289-8547): Can assist you in exploring your interests and abilities, choosing a major, connecting with internships and learning experiences, investigating graduate and professional school options, and landing your first job. We encourage you to schedule an appointment with a career advisor during your first year.

Counseling and Psychological Services (http://wellness.richmond.edu/offices/caps/ or 289-8119): Assists 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 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/ 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
Jan 14  **Introductions**

Jan 16  **Do Humans Have a ‘Nature’?**

Jan 21  **NO CLASS - MLK DAY**

Jan 23  **Evolution of Cooperation**
- Play game at: [http://ncase.me/trust/](http://ncase.me/trust/)

Jan 28  **What is Unique about Human Cooperation?**

Jan 30  **Multi-Level Human Societies**

Feb 4  **NO CLASS (Dr. vR sick)**

Feb 6  **Sex and Violence**

Feb 11  **Hierarchy and Leadership**
• Boehm, C. (1999). Chapter 2. 10

Feb 13  Gender and Leadership


Feb 18  Egalitarian Societies


Feb 20  NO CLASS (Dr. vR in Berlin)

Feb 25  Egalitarian Societies (cont.)


Feb 27  Transitions to More Centralized Leadership

• Boehm, C. (1999). Chapter 5. 16

Mar 4  Transitions to More Centralized Leadership


Mar 6  MIDTERM

Mar 11  SPRING BREAK

Mar 13  SPRING BREAK

Mar 18  Film: Ongka’s Big Moka

Mar 20  Transitions to More Centralized Leadership: Case Studies

Mar 25  **Transitions to More Centralized Leadership: Case Studies (cont.)**


Mar 27  **Cultural Evolution of States**


Apr 1  **War as a Driver of Cultural Evolution**


Apr 3  **War as a Driver of Cultural Evolution (cont.)**


Apr 8  **The Rise and Fall of States: China and the Pacific Islands**


Apr 10  **Institutions: Religion**


Apr 15  **Institutions: Laws, Police, and Recordkeeping**


Apr 17  Institutions: Marriage and Inheritance


Apr 22  Is Democracy Best?


Apr 24  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/](https://www.spectator.co.uk/2016/08/why-cant-we-see-that-were-living-in-a-golden-age/) 17

Apr 29  FINAL PAPER due (by 5pm, on Blackboard)

May 2  FINAL EXAM (9am-12pm)