

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

## FALL 2021

<b>TIME:</b>	Mon, Wed 10:30-11:45am
<b>LOCATION:</b>	Jepson Hall 102
<b>WEBSITE:</b>	<a href="https://blackboard.richmond.edu">https://blackboard.richmond.edu</a>
<b>INSTRUCTOR:</b>	Dr. Chris von Rueden
<b>EMAIL:</b>	<a href="mailto:cvonrued@richmond.edu">cvonrued@richmond.edu</a>
<b>OFFICE:</b>	Jepson Hall 235
<b>OFFICE HOURS:</b>	Fri 9:00am-11:00am Or by appointment at a different time
<b>ZOOM:</b>	<a href="https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84575502410?pwd=K2E3N2NnZGxVaHpOaU9TVnArbStlQT094wLYKJ">https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84575502410?pwd=K2E3N2NnZGxVaHpOaU9TVnArbStlQT094wLYKJ</a> (password)

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### **Course Description:**

In this course, we will study how biological and cultural evolution broadly shaped human societies. More specifically, students will investigate why human societies differ from other animal societies, and why leadership and political organization vary across human societies. Some of the questions we consider include: Why do we form families? Why are we prone to adopting leader and follower roles? How are human politics similar to or different from chimpanzee and bonobo politics? 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.

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### **Course Format:**

Class time will consist of a mix of lecture and discussion. Lecture and discussion will build off **assigned readings, which must be completed BEFORE the day they are listed** (see Class Schedule below). Readings are available on the class website or in links provided. In addition, two books are assigned for this course:

- Boyer, P. (2018). *Minds Make Societies*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

- Turchin, P. (2015). *Ultrasociety: How 10,000 Years of War Made Humans the Greatest Cooperators on Earth*. Chaplin, CT: Beresta Books.

**BEFORE the beginning of each class, you must also complete a quiz (on Blackboard)** on the readings assigned for that class day. During classtime, I strongly encourage you to comment, ask a question, or provoke discussion at any time. Approximately every two weeks, recent lecture slides will become available on Blackboard as a powerpoint file.

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### **How you will be graded:**

#### **1. Discussion (15% of grade)**

Your discussion grade will depend on you (a) attending classes. **Do not attend in-person if you are ill or suspect exposure to COVID-19. If you are ill and feel unable to participate online, you will not be penalized for missing class, so long as you communicate the reason for your absence with me.** Your discussion grade will also depend on you (b) asking questions during class and (c) actively participating in group discussions.

#### **2. Quizzes (15% of grade)**

**By 10:30am of each class day**, you will take a short quiz (on Blackboard) on the readings assigned for that class day. Quizzes are open-book and can be completed with the assistance of other students currently in the class. Quizzes become available online at the end of the previous class. The quizzes will consist of multiple choice or short answer questions. At the end of the semester, **you may drop your 3 lowest quiz grades**. Missed quizzes (for any reason) count towards the 3 you may drop.

#### **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. The midterm exam will be taken in the classroom on your computers (on Blackboard) at the scheduled time (see Class Schedule).

#### **4. Final Paper (20% of grade)**

Throughout the second half of the course, you will research the political organization of a particular human society, in collaboration with a partner if you so choose. In the final paper, you will defend a thesis that explains why the society is organized the way it is, in particular why the society's leadership is structured the way it is. The thesis should be built upon theory we've discussed in class, and defended with your research on the characteristics of

your society. These characteristics may include the society's food production system, size and density of its settlements, marriage and inheritance systems, technology, religion, extent of warfare, and/or trade. You may focus on one of these characteristics, or assess the relative effects of several of them.

The paper should be **at least 7 pages of text** (1-inch margins, double spaced, 12-point font), structured into three sections: (1) Introduction, in which you present your main argument, i.e. thesis; (2) body sections organized under specific headings, in which you defend your thesis with literature from class and from your own research (**minimum 3 sources that aren't from the reading list**); (3) Conclusion. In addition, include an alphabetized list of References, in which you provide the bibliographic information for the articles you cite. Wikipedia or blog posts are not valid bibliographic sources for papers written in this class, though they can be helpful in directing you towards the sources that you can cite (e.g. journal articles, news articles). To access journal articles or other resources online, you can make use of UR's library subscriptions. If you are off campus, you can log into UR's VPN: (<https://spidertech.net.richmond.edu/TDClient/1955/Portal/KB/ArticleDet?ID=93543>).

It is important that your paper not read like an encyclopedia entry. 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-text citations and the reference list should be in APA format: <https://www.mendeley.com/guides/apa-citation-guide>.

You are required to **submit a tentative thesis statement on Blackboard by the class session on November 15th.**

#### 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 material from after the midterm exam. The final exam will be taken in the classroom on your computers (on Blackboard) at the scheduled time (see Class Schedule).

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#### **Notes:**

1. **COVID-19 Policy:** Masks are to be worn at all times in the classroom, irrespective of your vaccination status. If your mask is not well-fitting, I will ask you to get a new one or leave class. The Delta variant means higher risk of break-through transmission, and my children are unvaccinated.

2. **Laptops:** Computers can be used in class only for purposes related to the class, particularly note-taking or accessing course materials. Use of the internet for other purposes, including chatting, emailing, or use of internet for entertainment, are not allowed during classtime and will negatively affect your discussion grade.
3. **Awarding of Credit:** 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](http://registrar.richmond.edu/services/policies/academic-credit.html)
4. **Religious Accommodation:** 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](http://registrar.richmond.edu/planning/religiousobs.html)
5. **Disability Accommodation:** 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](http://disability.richmond.edu)
6. **Plagiarism:** 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>
7. **Honor System:** When writing your final paper and when studying for and taking the quizzes/exams, 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." Unauthorized assistance includes consulting materials provided by students from past classes.  
[studentdevelopment.richmond.edu/student-handbook/honor/the-honor-code.html](http://studentdevelopment.richmond.edu/student-handbook/honor/the-honor-code.html)
8. **Microaggressions:** Microaggressions are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership. A comfortable and productive environment where meaningful learning happens can be collectively created through actions, words, or environmental cues that promote the inclusion and success of marginalized members, recognizing their embodied identity, validating their realities, resisting sexism, ableism, and racism.

The University of Richmond is committed to building an inclusive community. To do so, the following resources are available to support our students: **Spiders Against Bias** (an anonymous peer to peer support network that aids microaggression and bias incident survivors in connecting to different resources) and the **Bias Resource Team**. Additionally, this semester students are leading a series of workshops, **Not So Slight: Combating mAcroaggressions**, for students to learn how to recognize microaggressions and how to have meaningful conversations around difficult topics in an aggression-free environment.

With this in mind, as a community member at the University of Richmond, I pledge to address microaggressions in the classroom by holding myself, other students, and faculty accountable for what is said and being receptive to criticism when perpetuating these slights, snubs, or insults.

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## **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** ([asc.richmond.edu](http://asc.richmond.edu)): Academic coaches assist students in assessing and developing their academic and life-skills (e.g., critical reading and thinking, information conceptualization, concentration, test preparation, time management, stress management, etc.). Peer tutors offer assistance in specific subject areas (e.g., calculus, chemistry, accounting, etc.) and will be available for appointments in-person and virtually. Peer tutors are listed on the ASC website. Email [Roger Mancastroppa \(rmancast@richmond.edu\)](mailto:Rmancast@richmond.edu) and [Hope Walton \(hwalton@richmond.edu\)](mailto:Hwalton@richmond.edu) for coaching appointments in academic and life skills.

**Boatwright Library Research Librarians:** ([library.richmond.edu/help/ask/](http://library.richmond.edu/help/ask/) or 289-8876): Research librarians help students with all steps of their research, from identifying or narrowing a topic, to locating, accessing, evaluating, and citing information resources. Librarians support students in their classes across the curriculum and provide individual appointments, class library instruction, tutorials, and [research guides](http://libguides.richmond.edu) (libguides.richmond.edu). Students can [contact an individual librarian](http://library.richmond.edu/help/liaison-librarians.html) (library.richmond.edu/help/liaison-librarians.html) or ASK a librarian for help via email ([library@richmond.edu](mailto:library@richmond.edu)), text (804-277-9ASK), or [chat](http://library.richmond.edu/chat.html) (library.richmond.edu/chat.html).

**Career Services:** ([careerservices.richmond.edu](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** ([caps.richmond.edu](http://caps.richmond.edu) 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 brief consultations, short-term counseling and psychotherapy, skills-building classes, crisis intervention, psychiatric consultation, and related services.

**Disability Services** ([disability.richmond.edu](http://disability.richmond.edu)) The Office of Disability Services works to ensure that qualified students with a disability (whether incoming or current) are provided with reasonable accommodations that enable students to participate fully in activities, programs, services and benefits provided to all students. Please let your professors know as soon as possible if you have an accommodation that requires academic coordination and planning.

**Speech Center** ([speech.richmond.edu](http://speech.richmond.edu) or 287-6409): 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. Remote practice sessions can be arranged; we look forward to meeting your public speaking needs.

**Writing Center** ([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.

## Class Schedule and Reading Assignments

- Aug 23      **Introductions**
- Aug 25      **Race and Human Evolution**
- Saini, A. (May 30, 2019). Europeans looked down on Neanderthals- until they realized they shared their DNA. *Popular Science*.  
<https://www.popsci.com/excerpt-superior-race-science/>
  - Goodman, A. (March 13, 2020). Race is real, but it's not genetic. *Sapiens*.  
<https://www.sapiens.org/biology/is-race-real/>
- Aug 30      **Nature, Nurture, and Human Behavior**
- Boyer, Introduction
- Sep 1        **Group Conflict**
- Boyer, Chapter 1, pp. 33-51.
- Sep 6        **Group Conflict (continued)**
- Boyer, Chapter 1, pp. 52-65.
  - Alarcon, R. et al. (2019). The proximate causes of Waorani warfare. *Human Nature*, pp. 254-260.
- Sep 8        **Gender and Competition**
- Buckner, W. (2018, Feb. 24). The behavioral ecology of male violence. *Quillette*:  
<https://quillette.com/2018/02/24/behavioral-ecology-male-violence/>
  - Benenson, J. and Abadzi, H. (2019). Contest versus scramble competition: sex differences in the quest for status. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 33, 62-68.
- Sep 13      **Mating and Marriage**
- Boyer, Chapter 4, pp. 125-149.
  - Singh, M. (Mar 31, 2020). Is marriage over? *Aeon*.  
<https://aeon.co/essays/marriage-is-dead-long-live-marriage-how-will-we-couple-up>
- Sep 15      **In-Class Game (bring laptop)**
- Sep 20      **Cooperation**

- Boyer, Chapter 5, pp. 163-189
- Sep 22      **Leadership**
- King, A., Johnson, D. and van Vugt, M. (2009). The origins and evolution of leadership. *Current Biology*, 19, R911-R916.
- Sep 27      **Gender and Leadership**
- Smith, J., von Rueden C., et al. (2021). An evolutionary explanation for the female leadership paradox. *Frontiers in Ecology & Evolution*.  
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fevo.2021.676805>
- Sep 29      **Multi-Level Human Societies**
- Dunbar, R. (2012). Networking past and present. *Cliodynamics*, 3, 344-362.
- Oct 4      **Review for MIDTERM EXAM**
- Oct 6      **MIDTERM EXAM (in the classroom, on Blackboard)**
- Oct 11      **NO CLASS (fall break)**
- Oct 13      **Egalitarian Societies**
- Knight, C. (Feb. 11, 2019). Did laughter make the mind? *Aeon*.  
<https://aeon.co/essays/does-laughter-hold-the-key-to-human-consciousness>
  - Cashdan, E. (1980). Egalitarianism among hunters and gatherers. *American Anthropologist*, 82(1), 116-120.
- Oct 18      **Tribal Societies**
- Fukuyama, F. (2011). Tribal societies: property, justice, war. From *The Origins of Political Order* (pp. 64-79). New York, NY: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.
- Oct 20      **In-Class Film: Ongka's Big Moka**
- Oct 25      **Explaining Transitions to More Centralized Leadership**
- Carneiro, R. (2000). The transition from quantity to quality: a neglected causal mechanism in accounting for social evolution. *PNAS*, 97, 12926-12931.

- von Rueden, C. (2020). Making and unmaking egalitarianism in small-scale human societies. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 33, 167-171.
- Oct 27      **Inequality Doesn't Require Agriculture**
- Arnold, J. (2010). Chapter 6. From *The Evolution of Leadership*. Santa Fe: SAR Press.
- Nov 1      **Cultural Group Selection**
- Turchin, Chapters 1 and 4.
- Nov 3      **Cultural Evolution of States**
- Turchin, Chapter 6.
- Nov 8      **Cultural Evolution of States (continued)**
- Turchin, Chapters 7 and 8.
- Nov 10     **Religion**
- Turchin, Chapter 9.
  - Tentative final paper thesis due (on Blackboard)
- Nov 15     **Rules and Institutions**
- Singh et al. (2017). Self-interest and the design of rules. *Human Nature*, 28, 457-480.
- Nov 17     **Origins of Democracy**
- Wade, L. (2017). Unearthing democracy's roots. *Science*, 355, 1114-1118.
  - Shulevitz, J. (Oct, 2020). A new theory of Western civilization. *The Atlantic*: <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/10/joseph-henrich-weird-people/615496/>
- Nov 22     **Politics and Protest**
- Boyer, Chapter 2, pp. 82-92.
  - Boyer, Chapter 6, pp. 237-244.
  - Snyder, T. (Jan. 9, 2021). The American Abyss. *The New York Times* <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/09/magazine/trump-coup.html>

Nov 24      **NO CLASS (Thanksgiving break)**

Nov 29      **Democracy's Future**

- Turchin, P. (2016, Nov. 17). Entering the age of instability after Trump. Evonomics.com: <http://evonomics.com/science-predicting-rise-fall-societies-turchin/>
- Hyde, S. (2020). Democracy's backsliding in the international environment. *Science*, 369, 1192-1196.
- Dryzek, J. et al. (2019). The crisis of democracy and the science of deliberation. *Science*, 363, 1144-1146.

Dec 1        **Review for FINAL EXAM**

Dec 3        **FINAL PAPER due (by 5pm, on Blackboard)**

Dec 10      **FINAL EXAM (9am-12pm, in the classroom, on Blackboard)**