**Biology and Politics (PSC 3192W-11)**

Seminars: Tuesdays 11:10-1:00 p.m.  
Sci & Eng Hall B1270  
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Office Hours: 1:30–3:30 Tues & Thurs, preferably by appointment,  
Hall of Government 411

This course is designed to provide students with an accessible introduction to the study the biological basis of human behavior, sometimes referred to as “bio-politics” or “political biology.” The course will be interdisciplinary, drawing on work in the fields of political psychology, neurobiology, genetics, economics, and sociology in addition to political science. We will explore a number of issue areas within this budding field, including the study of political and moral behavior in primates and small children, the evolutionary origins of political attitudes, the development of tribes and clan-based politics, and the genetic basis of cooperation and conflict.

**Course Requirements**

1) One research paper (50%)  
   a. Abstract (5%)  
   b. Outline (5%)  
   c. First draft and presentation (10%)  
   d. Comments on another student’s paper (10%)  
   e. Final draft (20%)

2) Three responses to readings (10% each)

3) Attendance and class participation (20%)

**Readings**

Students will read approximately 200 pages of academic or policy material per class session.

Students should purchase the following books for the course:


All other readings will be posted on Blackboard.

**Research Paper**

Students will write a research paper related to one or more of the four topics around which the course is structured: the evolutionary origins of political dominance and morality; the biological basis of political opinions; tribalism and political order; or political decay and political violence. The purpose of the paper is to provide students with a deeper understanding of each of these substantive areas.

I encourage students to discuss ideas for their papers with me during office hours. I am also willing to review drafts of papers, but only during office hours and not over e-mail.

The paper should be no less than twenty pages in length and no more than twenty-five pages in length. Pages must be double-spaced with 12 point Times New Roman font and one-inch margins on all sides. Students will submit a draft abstract for their papers and an outline (see course schedule below for deadlines). All students will present the drafts of their papers during the last four weeks of class. Each student will select or be assigned one paper to provide feedback on when it is presented to the class. The final paper will be due on the last reading day of the semester. Papers submitted late, for any reason, will receive a one-point deduction per day.

**Responses to Readings**

Each student will write responses to the readings for three weeks of the course. Students should select one week's readings from three of the courses four sections, and should do so by the end of the second class.

These response memos should be 250 to 500 words in length, and should critically engage the readings for that week. *These are to be critical response memos, not summaries of the readings.* As such they should focus primarily on critiquing and synthesizing each set of readings from the student's own original perspective. Students will present the thoughts expressed in their memos to the other students in the class.

**Class Participation**

Students are required to attend and to participate in class discussions.
Learning Objectives

Students in this course should strive to meet the following objectives:

1) To learn about the biological foundations of political behavior.
2) To understand the potential applications of evolutionary theory to politics.
3) To consider the physical basis of moral judgments and political attitudes.
4) To better understand the origins of human political behavior.

Academic Integrity

By taking this course, you are agreeing to abide by the GWU code of Academic Integrity. According to this code, academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one’s own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.
September 1--Introduction

Hatemi and McDermott, "Evolution as a Theory for Political Behavior"

Part I: Chimps, Babies and Morality

September 8—Primate Politics

Proctor and Brosnan, “What Other Primates Can Tell Us About the Evolutionary Roots of Our Own Political Behavior”

Franz de Waal, Chimpanzee Politics, choose three chapters

September 15—Babies and Morality

Paul Bloom, Just Babies, choose five chapters

September 22—Conflict, Cooperation and the Human Brain

Joshua Greene, Moral Tribes, parts I and II mandatory, remainder optional

Part II: Republicans, Democrats and Political Values

September 29—Liberals and Conservatives I

John Hibbing and Kevin Smith, Predisposed, Chapters 1-5

October 6—Liberals and Conservatives II

John Hibbing and Kevin Smith, Predisposed, Chapters 6-9

October 13—Evolution and Political Values

Avi Tuschman, Our Political Nature, Chapters 1-8

****Abstracts due October 6

Part III: Tribes, Clans and Political Order

October 20—Biology of Tribalism

Avi Tuschman, Our Political Nature, Chapters 9-12

October 27—Tribalism and Political Development I

Francis Fukuyama, Origins of Political Order, parts I and II
November 3—Tribalism and Political Development II

Francis Fukuyama, *Origins of Political Order*, parts III and IV (part V optional)

****Paper outlines due October 28

**Part IV: Violence and Conflict**

*November 10—Conflict and Violence I*

Rose McDermott, “Hormones and Politics”
Adrian Raine, *The Anatomy of Violence*, chapters 1-4

*November 17—Conflict and Violence II*

Avi Tuschman, *Our Political Nature*, Chapter 13
Adrian Raine, *The Anatomy of Violence*, chapters 5, 6, 8 & 11

****Paper drafts to be circulated November 10

**Part V: Paper Presentations**

*November 24—Group I*

*December 1—Group II*

****Final papers due at midnight, December 11.****