PSYC 165: EVOLUTIONARY PSYCHOLOGY

In Workflow

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Approval Path

1. Tue, 16 Apr 2019 02:11:14 GMT
   Becky Penrod (penrodb): Approved for PSYC Committee Chair
2. Tue, 16 Apr 2019 17:36:05 GMT
   Rebecca Cameron (cameron): Approved for PSYC Chair
3. Fri, 03 May 2019 19:55:39 GMT
   Mical Shilts (shiltsm): Rollback to Initiator
4. Wed, 12 Jun 2019 21:52:07 GMT
   Becky Penrod (penrodb): Approved for PSYC Committee Chair
5. Thu, 13 Jun 2019 04:37:12 GMT
   Rebecca Cameron (cameron): Approved for PSYC Chair
6. Fri, 06 Sep 2019 17:18:30 GMT
   Mical Shilts (shiltsm): Rollback to Initiator
7. Tue, 10 Sep 2019 18:53:13 GMT
   Emily Wickelgren (wickelgr): Approved for PSYC Committee Chair
8. Tue, 10 Sep 2019 20:04:29 GMT
   Rebecca Cameron (cameron): Approved for PSYC Chair
9. Tue, 10 Sep 2019 20:40:30 GMT
   Mical Shilts (shiltsm): Approved for SSIS College Committee Chair
10. Wed, 11 Sep 2019 23:55:41 GMT
    Marya Endriga (mendriga): Approved for SSIS Dean

Date Submitted:Tue, 10 Sep 2019 18:50:22 GMT

Viewing:PSYC 165 : Evolutionary Psychology

Last edit:Tue, 10 Sep 2019 18:50:21 GMT

Changes proposed by: Emily Wickelgren (101025063)

Contact(s):

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Catalog Title:

Evolutionary Psychology

Class Schedule Title:

Evolutionary Psychology

Academic Group: (College)

SSIS - Social Sciences & Interdisciplinary Studies

Academic Organization: (Department)

Psychology

Will this course be offered through the College of Continuing Education (CCE)?
Yes

Please specify:
CCE Only

Catalog Year Effective:
Spring 2020 (2019/2020 Catalog)

Subject Area: (prefix)
PSYC - Psychology

Catalog Number: (course number)
165

Course ID: (For administrative use only.)
201967

Units:
3

In what term(s) will this course typically be offered?
Fall, Spring

Does this course require a room for its final exam?
Yes, final exam requires a room

Does this course replace an existing experimental course?
No

This course complies with the credit hour policy:
Yes

Justification for course proposal:
We are proposing to add PSY165 to GE Area B5 because this course encompasses content that matches well with the learning objectives of B5 (see syllabus). Students will be able to: 1) cite specific research (critical observations) from the science of Evolutionary Psychology, understand the underlying assumptions, i.e. the importance of survival and reproduction, to the science of Evolutionary Psychology, and grasp the main limitation of Evolutionary Psychology, which is the difficulty in testing hypotheses experimentally; 2) Recognize evidence-based conclusions and form reasoned opinions based on the scientific literature in Evolutionary psychology about issues of personal, public and ethical concern; and 3) Discuss issues relevant to the philosophy of science and the historical changes and additions to the understanding of evolution leading to the ultimate application of evolutionary theory to humans.

There were two changes made to the course to fit the B5 GE designation.
1. The prerequisites were eliminated in order to increase accessibility across majors. This will not prove problematic, as one of the course modules covers the scientific method and specific techniques used in Evolutionary Psychology to test hypotheses. Therefore the course is self-contained, in that students learn everything they need to know to understand Evolutionary Psychology, in the class setting.
2. We will offer the class in both semesters, rather than only in spring in order to best serve GE students.

Course Description: (Not to exceed 80 words and language should conform to catalog copy.)
Examination of empirical literature on emotion, behavior, and cognition of individuals from an evolutionary perspective. Topics can include: scientific methods in evolutionary psychology, survival strategies, mating strategies, parenting, kinship, cooperation, altruism, aggression, sexual conflict, and social dominance.

Are one or more field trips required with this course?
No

Fee Course?
No

Is this course designated as Service Learning?
No

Does this course require safety training?
No

Does this course require personal protective equipment (PPE)?
No

Does this course have prerequisites?
No

Does this course have corequisites?
No

Graded:
Letter

Approval required for enrollment?
No Approval Required

Course Component(s) and Classification(s):
Lecture

Lecture Classification
CS#01 - Large Lecture (K-factor=1 WTU per unit)
Lecture Units
3

Is this a paired course?
No

Is this course crosslisted?
No

Can this course be repeated for credit?
No

Can the course be taken for credit more than once during the same term?
No

Description of the Expected Learning Outcomes: Describe outcomes using the following format: "Students will be able to: 1), 2), etc."

Students will be able to:
1) Explain behavior, cognition, and emotion using evolutionary psychology terminology and theories
2) Interpret and critically evaluate research in evolutionary psychology
3) Communicate ideas in writing
4) Recognize issues of fairness in relation to gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and individuals with disabilities

GE Outcomes
Students will be able to do one or more of the following:
1) Cite critical observations, underlying assumptions and limitations to explain and apply important ideas and models in one or more of the following: physical science, life science, mathematics or computer science
2) Recognize evidence-based conclusions and form reasoned opinions about science-related matters of personal, public and ethical concern
3) Discuss historical or philosophical perspectives pertaining to the practice of science or mathematics

Assessment Strategies: A description of the assessment strategies (e.g., portfolios, examinations, performances, pre-and post-tests, conferences with students, student papers) which will be used by the instructor to determine the extent to which students have achieved the learning outcomes noted above.

Exams (ELO 1, 2 & 4; GE Outcomes: 1, 2, & 3)
Writing assignments (ELO 1, 2, 3, & 4; GE Outcomes 1, 2, & 3)

Is this course required in a degree program (major, minor, graduate degree, certificate?)
No

Does the proposed change or addition cause a significant increase in the use of College or University resources (lab room, computer)?

No

Will there be any departments affected by this proposed course?

No

I/we as the author(s) of this course proposal agree to provide a new or updated accessibility checklist to the Dean's office prior to the semester when this course is taught utilizing the changes proposed here.

I/we agree

University Learning Goals

Undergraduate Learning Goals:

Competence in the disciplines
Knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world
Integrative learning
Intellectual and practical skills

Is this course required as part of a teaching credential program, a single subject, or multiple subject waiver program (e.g., Liberal Studies, Biology) or other school personnel preparation program (e.g., School of Nursing)?

No

GE Course and GE Goal(s)

Is this a General Education (GE) course or is it being considered for GE?

Yes

In which GE area(s) does this apply?

B5. Further Studies in Physical Science, Life Forms and Quantitative Reasoning (Upper Division Only)

Which GE objective(s) does this course satisfy?

Develop an acquaintance and understanding of cultures and major dynamic social institutions which affect one's life.
Possess a significant and useful understanding of peoples from a diversity of cultures and backgrounds, including women and ethnic and other minority groups who have been the objects of prejudice and adverse discrimination within our society.
Gain a general understanding of current theory, concepts, knowledge, and scientific methods pertaining to the nature of the physical universe, ecosystems, and life on this planet.

Attach Course Syllabus with Detailed Outline of Weekly Topics:

PSYC 165 Syllabus GE.pdf

Syllabi must include: GE area outcomes listed verbatim; catalog description of the course; prerequisites, if any; student learning objectives; assignments; texts; reading lists; materials; grading system; exams and other methods of evaluation.

Will more than one section of this course be offered?

No

General Education Details - Area B5: Further Studies in Physical Science, Life Forms and Quantitative Reasoning

Section 1.

Indicate in written statements how the course meets the following criteria for Category B5. Relate the statements to the course syllabus and outline. Be as succinct as possible.

Course type:

Physical Science or Life Forms

For courses in physical science or life forms:

Develops an understanding of the principles underlying and interrelating natural phenomena including the foundations of our knowledge of living systems.

An overarching foundational principle relevant to Evolutionary Psychology is the Theory of Evolution. Students learn how genetics, through particulate inheritance, interact with the environment to affect the form and function of living organisms – most specifically human beings. Topics are discussed in terms of solutions to the persistent evolutionary problems of survival and reproduction.

Students are asked to think about current evolved psychological mechanisms as resulting from an interaction among genes, which have been shaped by Natural Selection, Sexual Selection, and Genetic Drift, and the influence of past environments. Students also analyze whether current human affect, behavior and cognition are adaptations, byproducts, or noise. Finally, students are asked to think about whether traits that evolved in an ancient environment because they were adaptive, can become maladaptive in another environment. An example of this principle is the human appetite for fat and sugar which worked well for our ancestors who lived in a calorie-deprived world, but is now harmful in places where food is plentiful.

A second perspective relevant to Evolutionary Psychology comes from Social Psychology, which posits that human affect, behavior, and cognition can best be understood by examining the unique characteristics of the individual interacting in a specific environment. So while Evolutionary Psychology explains the distal factors associated with evolved psychological mechanisms in the long run; Social Psychology explains the proximal factors that are associated with affect, behavior, and cognition in the here and now. These two interrelated perspectives complement each other, because they give a balanced picture of human affect, behavior, and cognition. In addition, the main forms of evidence that are used to test both Evolutionary and Social Psychological hypotheses come from observations of natural phenomena.

Introduces students to one or more of the disciplines whose purpose is to acquire knowledge of the physical universe and/or living systems and life forms.

Evolutionary Psychology is a combination of Social Psychology, Cross-Cultural Psychology, and Ethology, and so all types of research are presented. Evidence from non-human species, and more importantly, across differing human cultures is examined to learn about the evolution of human affect, behavior, and cognition.

Develops an appreciation of the methodologies of science and the limitations of scientific inquiry.

In the first part of class, students learn about the Scientific Method as a skeptical philosophy that is not tied to a technique, but rather to a point of view espousing hypothesis testing and observation. We discuss issues of measurement and falsifiability; correlation and lack of causality; the characteristics and strengths of experiments, such as the ability to make causal inferences; and the weaknesses of all science, such as bias, inaccuracy in measurement, and concerns for internal and external validity.

A variety of methods are discussed in this course, because a variety of different types of studies are needed to test evolutionary hypotheses, such as: archival content analyses, case studies, correlational research, observational research, and true experiments. These methods are used across a number of disciplines, and are highly relevant to Social Psychology.

Throughout the course, we use statistics in the interpretation of analyses of specific studies, as tools to test hypotheses. In addition, we continue to talk about skepticism, bias, causality, the external validity of specific studies, and the internal validity of specific experiments. Finally, we discuss how to weigh mixed evidence and when to withhold judgment.

Please Note: Courses listed in this category:
1) Need not be introductory courses and need not be as broad in scope as courses included in B1, B2, B3 or B4 i.e.; they may deal with a specialized topic.
2) These courses may have prerequisites or build on or apply concepts and knowledge covered in Areas B1, B2 and B4. For math courses, there must be an intermediate algebra prerequisite.

Addresses the specific GE student learning outcomes for area B5. A student should be able to do one or more of the following:

Cite critical observations, underlying assumptions and limitations to explain and apply important ideas and models in one or more of the following: physical science, life science, mathematics, or computer science.

The critical observations of Evolutionary Psychology are informed by the life sciences. That is, all organisms are related through a chain of genetic descent, and that speciation occurs through the processes of natural selection, sexual selection, and genetic drift. The main drivers of evolution are genetic variability, environmental selection pressure, and inheritance. Traits that enhance survival and reproduction tend to be retained within the genetic code, while those that lead to early death or inability to reproduce drop out of the gene pool. Evolutionary Psychology applies these principles of general biological evolution to human affect, behavior, and cognition by applying the modus tollens in a number of ways. To illustrate this application, take the principle of inclusive fitness, in which organisms increase the survival of genes most similar to their own by privileging their genetic kin. Evolutionary Psychologists have evaluated a vast array of evidence that supports this contention. For example, case study evidence from English Church records in the 1700s show that the presence of a maternal grandmother enhances the survival of her grandchildren. Likewise, cross-cultural evidence from humans has shown that the majority of wills name children as heirs. In addition, cross-species evidence has shown that food sharing in chimpanzees occurs most frequently with offspring, brothers, and sisters. Correlational studies have also revealed that people receive more life or death help from kin, than from friends, acquaintances, and strangers. Finally, experiments have shown that people intend to help kin more than non-kin. In discussing this evidence, students learn about the design of particular studies, the statistical analysis of their findings, the evolutionary interpretation of the findings, and the limitations of each unique study.

In discussing the limitations of the discipline, I often tell students that the theories proposed in Evolutionary Psychology are not the only ways to understand human affect, behavior, and cognition. There are other perspectives that give different explanations. In addition, while Evolutionary Psychology can describe and explain large cross-cultural and cross-species similarities, it cannot predict how any one person will act in a specific situation. There are always exceptions to the rule - nature loves variation.

Recognize evidence-based conclusions and form reasoned opinions about science-related matters of personal, public and ethical concern.

Evolutionary Psychology is a science that describes and explains human affect, behavior, and cognition, but does not prescribe morals or ethics. Understanding how people interact and treat each other does not enshrine the behavior as an ideal. For example, parents tend to favor offspring who resemble them and to prefer genetic children over step-children. This favoritism can show up in decisions about paying for college tuition, inheritance patterns, and even homicide. These results are found across cultures, but they do not give free rein to parents to fully express their favoritism. Knowledge and understanding about a phenomenon is not the same as permission.

Other personal and public phenomena that are discussed include mating behavior, sexual conflict, interactions with kin, cooperation, aggression, homicide, warfare, dominance, culture, and psychopathology. All topics are analyzed with regard to evolutionary function and fit within the modern environment. For example, students ponder the potential results of the separation of reproduction from sexual behavior, via the use of reliable contraceptives. In addition, the ethical ramifications of research findings are discussed throughout the semester.

Discuss historical or philosophical perspectives pertaining to the practice of science or mathematics.

In class, students learn about the scientific method abstractly and discuss the issue of falsifiability. Then they apply these abstract ideas to specific, concrete studies. They also are exposed to historical discussions of how evolution and genetics were envisioned in the past and how they are understood today. Students learn about the history of Evolutionary Psychology in our discussion of Ethology and how the study of non-human animal behavior led to the notion of studying humans. Because of the influence of Social Psychologists, who look at the interaction of the person with the situation, the study of human behavior expanded to include emotion and cognition. Finally, Evolutionary Psychologists added the perspective that some thoughts, feelings, and behaviors could be genetically carried as “software” within humans across cultures, because this software enhanced survival and reproduction. For example, parental care in human males is unique among primates, and yet we see many forms of paternal investment in offspring across cultures. Evolutionary Psychologists posit answers to the “Big Why” questions, because they can relate findings back to survival and reproduction. Then they use the modus tollens to test their hypotheses.

Includes a writing component described on course syllabus

I) If course is lower division, formal and/or informal writing assignments encouraging students to think through course concepts using at least one of the following: periodic lab reports, exams which include essay questions, periodic formal writing assignments, periodic journals, reading logs, other. Writing in lower division courses need not be graded, but must, at a minimum, be evaluated for clarity and proper handling of terms, phrases, and concepts related to the course.
2) If course is upper division, a minimum of 1500 words of formal, graded writing. [Preferably there should be more than one formal writing assignment and each writing assignment (e.g. periodic lab reports, exams which include essay questions, a research/term paper etc.) should be due in stages throughout the semester to allow the writer to revise after receiving feedback from the instructor. Include an indication of how writing is to be evaluated and entered into course grade determination.]

Throughout the semester students will be asked to write a response to questions posted on Canvas, paying attention to both the content and organization of thoughts. These writing assignments will make up 25% of students' grade.

Section 2.

If you would like, you may provide further information that might help the G.E. Course Review Committee understand how this course meets these criteria and/or the G.E. Program Objectives found in the CSUS Policy Manual, General Education Program, Section I.B.

This course would be a nice counterbalance to other courses in area B5 as it provides a focus on evolution from a psychology perspective yet still deals with life science topics.

Reviewer Comments:

Mical Shilts (shiltsm) (Fri, 03 May 2019 19:55:39 GMT): Rollback: Please see email for changes requested.
Mical Shilts (shiltsm) (Fri, 06 Sep 2019 17:18:30 GMT): Rollback: Minor change needed to ELO#2.

Key: 3998