

SYLLABUS: ANTH 349 ORIGINS OF ART

Instructor: Dr. Michelle Scalise Sugiyama

Email: mscalise@uoregon.edu

Office: 355 Condon Hall

Office Hours: by appointment

GTF: Nikki Cox

Email: ncox@uoregon.edu

Office: 365A Condon Hall

Office Hours: by appointment

“More than 95% of art history falls before 2000 years ago, less than 5% of the pages in art history textbooks are devoted to the subject” (White 2003).

Course Content: This course addresses the question: Why do humans make art? The earliest art dates back tens of thousands of years, which means that art behavior emerged in a hunting-and-gathering context. Hunter-gatherer life is dangerous, difficult, and rigorous: why would our ancestors have “wasted” their time and energy on what appear to be non-utilitarian objects and activities? We will explore this question by examining some of the most influential hypotheses regarding the role that art behavior played in early human societies. To evaluate these hypotheses, we will examine the archaeological and ethnographic records to understand: (1) the basic features of hunter-gatherer life; (2) the range of art forms and media that hunter-gatherer peoples employ; (3) the subject matter of hunter-gatherer art; and (4) the occasions and settings in which art behavior occurs in hunter-gatherer societies. By the end of the course, you should have a better understanding of what art is and the role that it played in ancestral human groups, which you can then use to better understand the role that art plays in modern environments. Course reading consists of scientific articles on prehistoric artworks, theories of art behavior, and human evolution, as well as hunter-gatherer ethnography.

Course Requirements. All course materials (i.e., syllabus, readings, lectures, assignments, quizzes) except for exams are posted on the course Canvas site and organized by week like the **Schedule of Readings** (see below). You are responsible for checking the course Canvas site regularly for updates and announcements. No extra credit allowed; no late work or make-ups allowed without Approved Proof of Legitimate Reason for missing the due date (for exceptions, see **Technical Difficulties**). Except as noted, each week you must complete the following:

1. **Readings:** A set of articles/chapters to be read before listening to the lectures. The lectures reference the readings, so they will be hard to follow if you haven't done the reading first.
2. **Lectures:** A set of lectures to be watched before taking the week's quiz.
3. **Discussion Board Assignments:** Each week you must make two discussion board posts. First posts are due by 11:59 p.m. on Thursdays, and second posts are due by 11:59 p.m. on Saturdays. In your first post you must respond to that week's discussion prompt, and in your second post you must respond to another student's post. Discussion board assignments test your ability to apply important concepts and research findings presented in the week's readings/lectures, and to evaluate hypotheses using empirical evidence. In so doing, they also serve as review for quizzes. Each week's posts are worth 200 points (100 points for the first post, and 100 points for the second post). Your posts must be polite and respectful (points will be deducted if they are not): before making your first post, please read the Netiquette guidelines in the Getting Started module.

4. **Quizzes:** Every week there is a 15-question, 20-minute, closed book, multiple-choice, online quiz on the week's readings and lectures. Quizzes must be taken by 11:59 p.m. on Saturdays. Quizzes are designed to test your understanding of core course concepts and important research findings.

Grading Rubric: Your course grade is calculated by dividing the total number of points you earn by the total number of points possible. Grading is done on a straight percentage scale:

| | | |
|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| A+ = 99-100% | A = 93-98.9% | A- = 90-92.9% |
| B+ = 87-89.9% | B = 83-86.9% | B- = 80-82.9% |
| C+ = 77-79.9% | C = 73-76.9% | C- = 70-72.9% |
| D+ = 67-69.9% | D = 63-66.9% | D- = 60-62.9% |
| F = < 59.9% | | |

Expected levels of performance:

A+: Quality of student's performance significantly exceeds all requirements and expectations required for an A grade. Very few, if any, students receive this grade in a given course.

A: Quality of performance is outstanding relative to that required to meet course requirements; demonstrates mastery of course content at the highest level.

B: Quality of performance is significantly above that required to meet course requirements; demonstrates mastery of course content at a high level.

C: Quality of performance meets the course requirements in every respect; demonstrates adequate understanding of course content.

D: Quality of performance is at the minimal level necessary to pass the course, but does not fully meet the course requirements; demonstrates a marginal understanding of course content.

F: Quality of performance in the course is unacceptable and does not meet the course requirements; demonstrates an inadequate understanding of course content.

Technical Difficulties: With online courses, technical failures inevitably occur. As I cannot monitor the course site continually, I depend on you to notify me of any tech issues as soon as they come to your attention. Don't panic if I don't respond to your email immediately (see **Office Hours**). When tech failures occur, deadlines will be extended as appropriate.

Office Hours: Since this is an online course, I do not have regularly scheduled office hours. Instead, you can "meet" with me via email. I check my email twice a day, once in the early morning and again in the early evening. (I often check it at other times as well, but these are unpredictable.) This means that if you email me after 7:00 p.m. I probably won't see it until the next morning, and if you email me in the late morning or early afternoon, I probably won't see it until that evening. I am also available for Skype or face-to-face meetings by appointment.

Students With Disabilities: Appropriate accommodations will be provided for students with documented disabilities. If you anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please contact me asap and send me a notification letter from Disability Services outlining your accommodations.

Make Copies of Your Work! Given that this is an online course, I recommend that you store all of your work on a personal external memory drive. The recommended workflow is to create all your discussion board posts on a word processing document and then cut and paste into the forum on Canvas. Your instructor is not responsible for lost or missing coursework. Please be safe and back up your work!

Academic Honesty: Academic misconduct is a violation of the UO Student Conduct Code, which prohibits the “act of cheating, fabrication, and plagiarism. Examples: looking at another person’s exam, making up lab results, and failing to cite sources in a paper.” Listening to lectures, watching films, and studying with other students in the class is allowed and encouraged, but all tests and assignments must be done independently: all work submitted for this course must be your own and produced exclusively for this class. Any student who engages in academic dishonesty risks failing the class.

Student Learning Outcomes: By the end of the term, students can expect to be familiar with

- 1) key features of hunter-gatherer life
- 2) the role that information exchange has played in our species’ evolution
- 3) animal signaling theory
- 4) major hypotheses regarding the kinds of information art behavior is used to transmit
- 5) the range of art forms and media that hunter-gatherer peoples use
- 6) recurrent patterns in the subject matter of hunter-gatherer art
- 7) occasions and settings in which art behavior occurs in hunter-gatherer societies

SCHEDULE OF READINGS

WEEK 1 Art Behavior & Evolution

Morris 2013 “Non-human art,” “Child art”

White 2003 “Introduction,” “Art, Culture, and the Issue of Context”

Evans and Zarate 2005 *Introducing Evolutionary Psychology* (pp. 3-60)

WEEK 2 Aesthetic Responses

Barrett et al. 2007 “The human entry into the cognitive niche”

Eibl-Eibesfeldt 1988 “The biological foundation of aesthetics” (pp. 29-49 only!)

Orians & Heerwagen 1992 “Evolved responses to landscapes”

Singh & Luis 1995 “Ethnic and gender consensus for the effect of waist-to-hip ratio on judgment of women’s attractiveness”

WEEK 3 Signaling & Sensory Exploitation

Krebs & Dawkins 1984 “Animal signals: Mind-reading and manipulation”

Verpooten & Nelissen 2010 “Sensory exploitation and cultural transmission: The late emergence of iconic representations in human evolution”

Dissanayake 1995 “Chimera, spandrel, or adaptation”

WEEK 4 Beginnings Part I

Joordens et al. 2015 “Homo erectus at Trinil on Java used shells for tool production and engraving” (pp. 228-230)

Henshilwood et al 2002 “Emergence of modern human behavior: Middle Stone Age engravings from South Africa”

Henshilwood et al 2004 “Middle Stone Age shell beads from South Africa”

Bouzouggar et al. 2007 “82,000-year-old shell beads from North Africa”

White 2003 “Chapter 4: Prehistoric representations in Western Europe”

Balme & Morse 2006 “Shell beads and social behavior in Pleistocene Australia”

Aubert et al. 2014 “Pleistocene cave art from Sulawesi, Indonesia” (pp. 223-226 only)

WEEK 5 Beginnings Part II

White 2005 “Chapter 5: Prehistoric representation in Central and Eastern Europe and Siberia”

Conard 2009 “A female figurine from the basal Aurignacian in Hohle Fels cave in southwestern Germany”

Gertcyk 2016 “World famous ancient Siberian Venus figurines ‘are not Venuses after all’”

WEEK 6 Ethnographic Context

Lee 1984 “Hxaro exchange,” “Coping with life: religion, world view, and healing” (pp. 103-115)

Bogoras 1904-1909 “Chukchee tattooing and personal adornment” (pp. 254-260)

Mountford & Tonkinson 1969 “Carved and engraved human figures from North Western Australia”

Turnbull 1983 “The Forest World” (pp. 50-54)

Chagnon 1997 “Political alliances, trading, and feasting” (pp. 116-119, 159-164, 170-178, 195-198)

Rasmussen 1929 “Songs and dances, games and pastimes” (pp. 227-244)

WEEK 7 Signaling: Cooperation

Jochim 1983 “Palaeolithic cave art in ecological perspective”

Mithen 1990 “Looking and learning: UP art and information gathering”

WEEK 8 Signaling: Territory & Warfare

Eibl-Eibesfeldt 1988 “The biological foundation of aesthetics” (pp. 55-59 only!)

Hagen & Bryant 2003 “Music and dance as a coalition signaling system”

Hagen & Hammerstein 2009-2010 “Did Neanderthals and other early humans sing? Seeking the biological roots of music in the territorial advertisements of primates, lions, hyenas, and wolves”

Parkman 1986 “Cupule petroglyphs in the Diablo Range, California”

WEEK 9 Signaling: Mating & Reproduction

Coe 2003 “The ancestress hypothesis and visual art: An overview”

Miller 1999 “Sexual selection for cultural displays”

Mithen 2003 “Handaxes: The first aesthetic artifacts”

WEEK 10 The Artist

McDermott 1996 “Self-representation in Upper Paleolithic female figurines”

Haskovec & Sullivan 1989 “Reflections and rejections of an Aboriginal artist”