

ANTH 1006

Introduction to Anthropology

THIS COURSE introduces you to what we know about who we are as humans, how and why we got that way, and what this augurs for your future.

We address these issues during 9 learning modules. Each module focuses on a specific set of learning goals. Each module builds on earlier ones. You will find the information necessary to reach these goals in a set of readings and in an occasional film. If you reach the understandings formally stated as learning goals, you may apply that knowledge effectively to larger questions that bear on how (and how well) you will live your life. You will address one related question in (1) an online community discussion board, and another (2) as a self-contained essay, paper, or commentary. You may draw on earlier papers and discussion board commentary for subsequent discussion board comments, papers, essays, or commentaries – the more, the better, and remember to cite people as well as literature and films properly. I expect your last Discussion Board contributions and your last essay (Module 9) to integrate ideas and perspectives that you develop earlier in this class. Your last assignments will thus count as your Final, from which I will evaluate your mastery of the concepts and skills that are part of the course. I will answer questions in class and online, and will participate in Discussion Board conversations.

REQUIREMENTS: Active participation in class discussions (via the online Discussion Board) and a series of essays, papers, and commentaries on selected issues for nine learning Modules. I will assign grades as points (e.g., 2.0=C, 3.0=B, 3.3=B+, A=4.0, B+/A-=3.5). Use a 12 pt font, single space, and for Modules 1-8 limit any one paper, essay, or commentary to 500 words maximum, unless you receive permission to write more. For Module 9, limit your paper to 1,000 words, unless you receive permission to write more. Discussion Board contributions may go on for 1000s of words, but limit any one contribution to 500 words, unless you receive permission to make it longer.

All work for each Module must be completed by the assignment date. Late submissions default to a grade of 0.0 You may work through the course faster if you wish. We will respond to your submissions within 7 days of the due date.

This is not a 'writing' course but you must write acceptably well or you will fail this course. Use Strunk & White's *The Elements of Style* as your guide to good writing. For a C, write clearly and with details from the readings and films. Write concisely with active verbs. Your grade will shift from a C to a B as you add details that make it clear that you thoroughly understand the required readings and films and how they apply to the issues you write about. Your grade will shift from a B to an A as you add breadth and specifics that make it clear that you have begun to see the wider implications of the issues you write about.

I want you to produce arguments, not provide opinions. Opinions don't count because we have no reason to think they're any more than your fantasy. Arguments count to the extent that they (1) contain no logical fallacies and (2) provide evidence (the stronger the better) that a claim corresponds with a set of observations. Critically evaluate your own argument, and those of others. Critical evaluations do *not* consist of statements like "I don't believe you," or "I don't understand," or "you should have written on something else," or "but that doesn't account for this contradictory example." No one cares what you 'believe' unless you can justify the belief with evidence. It's your responsibility to get the information so you do understand. It's not your business to tell someone else what topic to write on. And instances do not invalidate generalizations. Critical evaluations consist of statements like "This argument doesn't make sense, and here's why – [cite and explain the logical fallacies and/or evidence weaknesses]," or "This argument makes sense, and here's why – [cite and explain its strengths in logic and evidence]."

In summary, your course grade will come from the following:

Modules 1-8 – 80%
10 Discussion Board contributions and 8 essays, papers, and
commentaries
Module 9 – Final - 20%
2 Discussion Board contributions and 1 essay, paper, or
commentary

I will assume college prep levels of knowledge and skills to find the answer to questions, like 'What counts as plagiarism?' I will give you an F for the *course* if I see you submit someone else's work as your own. No one can achieve their best without help and I urge you to help one another do better. In the process, you will use someone else's ideas or words. Give them credit for helping you! Citations to others, including to the readings, count heavily in all assignments.

WHO ARE YOUR INSTRUCTORS?

Penn Handwerker graduated from Willamette University in 1966 with a B.A. and from the University of Oregon in 1971 with a PhD. I taught at the University of Oregon, Washington State University, and Humboldt State University before coming to the University of Connecticut as a Professor of Anthropology in 1994. I trained as a general anthropologist with an emphasis on the intersection of biological and cultural anthropology, and have published in all five fields (applied, archaeology, biological, cultural, and linguistics) of anthropology. I have conducted field research in

- West Africa (~3 years residence in Liberia, with short excursions to Sierra Leone, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, during 1968, 1969-70, 1977-78, 1984),
- the West Indies (5+ years residence, in Barbados during 1985, 1986, 1990, 1991, and 1992, Antigua during 1988 and 1989, and St. Lucia during 1986 and 1990),
- the Russian Far East (Chukotka in 1995),
- and various portions of the contemporary United States (Oregon, California's North Coast, Connecticut, and Alaska).

I developed new methods with which to study cultures while I studied topics that included the causes and consequences of entrepreneurship in both food production and marketing, corruption, human fertility, and both inter- and intragenerational power differences. My current research focuses on the possibility that the most effective collective action for community sustainability reflects the cultural assumption that each person knows what's best for him or herself. See <http://www.anth.uconn.edu/faculty/handwerker/> for more information.

Nicola Bulled graduated from Colorado State University, Fort Collins, in 2002 with a B.S. and from Boston University in 2005 with a Masters in Public Health. As a graduate student at BU, I spent a summer conducting formative research exploring the acceptance of an HIV testing clinic on a university campus in Lesotho in addition to obtaining baseline data on HIV knowledge, attitudes and practices of university students. Following graduation I spent a year as a Program Manager for the Boston Needle Exchange Program, where I conducted research on the return rates of syringes and the culture of needle sharing among Boston injection drug users. I then spent three years as an Epidemiologist for the Massachusetts Department of Public Health working with the CDC in calculating the incidence (new infections) of HIV in Massachusetts and studying the accuracy of self reported HIV testing behavior. I returned to school in 2008 to pursue a PhD in Anthropology with a focus on Applied Critical Medical Anthropology. I am currently conducting research exploring the role of the Internet on health seeking behaviors in CT. As my public health work focused primarily on HIV/AIDS I hope to continue that focus in my PhD dissertation work studying the influence of globalization on puberty rites ceremonies in Lesotho.

WHO ARE YOU?

Please tell us a little about yourself.

Human Nature

Module 1: What were the first people like and are we the same?

Perhaps the most important characteristic of human nature is that we cannot *not* create, live as a part of, and change cultures. In this sense, cultures are built into us. We can't wish cultures away. Our brains produce them in the normal course of their operation. How all this happened and what it means for your life today is the subject of this course.

Learning Goals for Module 1:

- (1) Describe what it was like to live 100,000 years ago.
- (2) Begin to explore how human nature evolved and continues to shape our future.
- (3) Begin to recognize basic characteristics of culture:
 - consists of shared assumptions, shared understandings about what we should and not do (which we call cultural norms), and coordinated patterns of behavior— plus bodies of knowledge about the things of our world and how they operate, including how to make things happen.
 - identifiable only by reference to specific assumptions, norms, and patterns of behavior
 - individuals embody multiple cultures, some named, some not, some global, some local
 - the assumptions, norms, and coordinated patterns of behavior that make up a specific culture accomplish goals.
- (4) Recognize cultural differences as differences in shared assumptions:

In the second edition of his book *Yanomamo*, published in 1977, the anthropologist Napoleon Chagnon tells the story of a visit to Caracas, Venezuela, with his Yanomamo friend, Rerebawa. For as long as anyone remembered, the Yanomamo lived in relative isolation in the rainforests along the border of Venezuela and Brazil. That was changing rapidly with the arrival of more missionaries, mission stations, and even tourists. Chagnon became increasingly concerned that his Yanomamo friends and acquaintances needed to understand the threat posed by these changes. He tried unsuccessfully to convey a sense of the wider world of which the Yanomamo were a tiny part. Yanomamo seemed to think of the places he tried to describe, like Washington, DC, or Caracas, as just another large Yanomamo village (*shabono*). Finally, Chagnon decided that the best way to convey the threat that concerned him was to show a Yanomamo first-hand what was out there.

Rerebawa took with him some ashes to mix with his tobacco in case the people of Caracas did not cook over fires made on the floor of their houses. Although Rerebawa had seen planes land in the bush, he had never flown in one and, when he learned that he should strap himself into the seat, was concerned that the plane might crash into the upper layer of the world. When they landed outside Caracas, Rerebawa immediately recognized the large hangar as the den of the creature in which he had ridden. Chagnon asked him to get into a car to ride into the city while he collected their baggage from the plane. After Chagnon pointed out the car, Rerebawa walked around it puzzled, studied it closely, and, finally, dove through the open window.

Rerebawa did not get in the car door because he did not see a door. A door consists of two parts, one a solid thing that fills a space through which you might pass, the other a means to open the solid thing (hinges, a door handle) to allow you to do so. A Yanomamo *shabono* consisted of a large, round space enclosed with saplings, sometimes as much as 100 yards in diameter, with a thatched roof open above the center of a central plaza, and surrounded by a palisade of logs about 10 feet high. Yanomamo residences consisted of unclosed spaces under the *shabono's* roof, which extended upward about 30 feet from the outside wall. Individual residences, which extend one after another around the circumference, were marked off from their neighbors only by roof supports. A Yanomamo *shabono* thus approximates a very large house that varied in size by the number of residents. Yanomamo villages

and residences contained no doors. You enter a *shabono* through an opening only 3 to 5 feet high. Rerebawa thus did not see the door because he did not know what a door was because doors were completely outside his range of experience.

The things of our world of experience consist of ideas. We take for granted that a material world exists independently of our imagining. But that world doesn't tell us what's there. We have to guess at its parts and how they fit together, or how they don't. We do so by making assumptions about what's there. All human knowledge rests on assumptions. Assumptions are true by definition. They can't be proved. All assumptions probably contain errors, some are plainly wrong, but some assumptions prove useful. We label important ones and, however ambiguously in specific cases, we differentiate one from another by defining each by a set of properties. A door is a door, not a chair, a house, or a person, although there are many kinds of doors. A chair is a thing you can sit on—it has a more-or-less flat surface about 18" by 18" square placed at varying distances (ordinarily at least 6" and no more than 24") above the ground by stabilizing supports we call legs and an attached vertical surface we call a back. We call the same thing with a round surface a stool. We call the same thing without a back and with a larger surface a table.

Many people know what doors are. Many fewer realize that a woman can marry a ghost and bear his children, or that a married woman with children can marry another woman and father still more children as the husband of the new wife. Yet, ghost marriages occurred among groups as dissimilar as Nuer pastoralists in the southern Sudan and Chinese migrants to Singapore. Female husbands occurred among the Fon of Dahomey and more than thirty other African societies, including the Nuer.

Our knowledge of the world consists of systems of ideas that we construct in our imaginations without being conscious of doing so. Some may strike you as quite fanciful. All consist of an identifiable set of things bound together by identifiable relations. Over the course of our lives, each of us constructs these things, and modifies them, out of the unique set and sequence of experiences that mark the trajectory of our life.

Most important, we don't control this process. We can't stop it, start it, or wish it away. As Clifford Geertz surmised, our brains process sensory information in ways that make it inevitable.

Read:

Handwerker, W Penn (2009) *The Origin of Cultures*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press. (Chapter 1)

Hayden, Brian (1995) *Archaeology*. NY: WH Freeman (Chapter 5)

Films to watch: *The Hunters*, *The Pygmies*

Class Discussion Board: 1st post due Sept 6th – last response due Sept 10th

What counts as human nature? How did human nature show up among early humans? How is that different today? How do the things that make up human nature make it possible or imperative to make and change cultures – to create assumptions, to share them, to trace their logical implications as shared choices we should or should not make, and to coordinate our behavior?

Write on the following, due Sept 10th:

Did forager survival depend on being part of an effective team? If not, what specific characteristics did their survival depend on and how, exactly, did these characteristics work to promote survival? If yes, describe the characteristics of an effective team. If people must exhibit specific characteristics to be members of an effective team, do these match characteristics we now call 'human nature,' and what, exactly are they?

Its Origins

Module 2: How to construct and run living things...

You and I are living things, just like toads, lions, and blue-green algae. And just like toads, lions, and blue-green algae, a genome determines our existence, and what we can and cannot do. Because our genome means that we cannot *not* create, live as a part of, and change cultures, to understand our origins and our potential futures, we must understand some of how this open energy system we call 'life' gets constructed and works.

Learning Goals for Module 2:

- (1) Describe the basic characteristics and interdependencies among DNA, genes, chromosomes, genomes, amino acids (e.g., tryptophan), proteins (e.g., dopamine, norepinephrine, serotonin), cells (e.g., neuron), organ systems (e.g., CNS), phenotype, organism
- (2) Apply these principles to human nature

Read: The New Genetics (2006) Bethesda, MD: National Institutes of Health.

Class Discussion Board: 1st post due Sept 13th – last response due Sept 17th

If your brain produces your thoughts and your genes produce your brain, your genes must produce your thoughts. If your genes produce your thoughts, how can you have free will to choose anything you want? If you don't, what are the limits of 'free will' and do these limits have anything to do with why our ancestors produced descendants (us) and other early people left no descendants?

Write on the following, due Sept 17th:

What's a gene, what do genes do, what would happen if you had no genes, and what is it (specifically) about your genome that makes your existence possible?

Module 3: How to change living things...

Just like toads, lions, and blue-green algae, we have ancestors who looked and acted very much like we do, similarities that come from a genome they passed down to us. And, just like toads, lions, and blue-green algae, we also have ancestors who did not look or act the same as us. In fact, we share parts of our genome with toads, lions, as well as blue-green algae – which means that some of *our* ancestors also passed along parts of their genome to relatives that we today call toads, lions, and blue-green algae. Because the genome that now makes us possible, and makes it impossible for us to *not* create, live as a part of, and change cultures, to understand our origins and our potential futures, we must explore how and under what circumstances genome evolution occurs.

Learning Goals for Module 3:

- (1) Describe how we measure the absence of evolution (Hardy-Weinberg conditions) and the processes that lead to changes in the genome shared by a population, which we call evolution: mutation (nature, sources, rates), inbreeding, gene flow, drift, and selection.
- (2) Apply these principles to human nature.

Read: <http://science.howstuffworks.com/evolution/evolution.htm/printable>

Class Discussion Board: 1st post due Sept 20th – last response due Sept 24th

How do genes that kill us, like those for Tay-Sachs and sickle-cell disease, spread widely in (rather than be eliminated from) human populations?

Write on the following, due Sept 24th:

- Illustrate with data on human biology the operation of forms of evolution that produce (1) unpredictable and (2) predictable changes in life forms. How may these apply today?

Module 4: How our ancestor's bodies and cultures made their descendants into who we are

Genome products (phenotypes) have consequences that vary with the environmental context in which a creature tries to live. Genome changes in populations occur by selection when part of the genome product helps or hurts an individual's ability to survive, eat well reliably, and reproduce. Changes in the consequences of a genome product come about because something changes in the world in which a creature lives. The appearance of a new danger or opportunity, or the disappearance of old ones, may come from changes in climate, in the size, composition, or locations of human populations or their food, or new ideas and behavior that produce changes in patterns of human interaction. Interdependencies among multiple dangers and opportunities in the physical and living world that surrounds us produces coevolution of features of our biology and the cultures we create, live, and change, as well as in the landscapes we occupy and among the life forms our activities affect. We call these interdependencies a species' evolutionary ecology.

Learning Goal for Module 4:

Identify interdependencies that characterized human evolutionary ecology which may have produced the distinctive characteristics of our species, including:

- bipedal locomotion,
- lengthened periods of senescence,
- language,
- fire,
- dark skin, light skin,
- heavy reliance on meat rather than vegetable foods,
- the ability to thicken our blood *and* to decrease our sweat rate *and* to maintain high skin temperatures *and* to increase the efficiency of energy expenditure when exposed to (a) high altitude, (b) dry heat, (c) cold, and (d) caloric restrictions, respectively;
- to design clothing;
- to defend one's self with violence;
- cognitive skills important for effective participation in team activities;
- intelligence; and
- our inability to exist independently of cultures.

Read: Wade, Nicholas (2006) *Before the Dawn*. NY: Penguin. ISBN: 978-0143038320

Class Discussion Board: 1st post due Sept 27th – last response due Oct 8th

What characteristics may give some contemporary humans a selective advantage over other humans, and what are these advantages? How are these the same or different from the characteristics that gave our ancestors a selective advantage over the other humans who left no descendants?

Write on the following, due Oct 8th

When and under what circumstances did the following characteristics give our ancestors a selective advantage over people who left no descendants – bipedal locomotion, lengthened periods of senescence, language, fire, dark skin, light skin, heavy reliance on meat rather than vegetable foods, the ability to thicken our blood *and* to decrease our sweat rate *and* to maintain high skin temperatures *and* to increase the efficiency of energy expenditure when exposed to (a) high altitude, (b) dry heat, (c) cold, and (d) caloric restrictions, respectively; to design clothing; to defend one's self with violence;

Its Effects...

Module 5. Flows of Information, Genes, and Behavior

A fundamental characteristic of human nature is to reproduce with people with whom we interact. Each person in the world has had about 17 billion ancestors between today and 1066 when the Normans invaded England. By our most accurate estimate, however, only 125 billion people have ever lived over the last 200,000 years, and only some of these 125 billion left descendants. This means that each of us shares a huge number of ancestors with each other – we are brothers and sisters in fundamental ways. Because each of us, regardless of size, shape, or sex, share nearly 100% of our genome, we all look very much alike. Physical differences we see come from an extraordinarily tiny section of our genome, which reflects flows of genes over time, and barriers to gene flows. An equivalently fundamental characteristic of human nature is to learn from what we see in the world around us, and from what we do not see, particularly with people with whom we interact. Our propensity to reproduce with people with whom we're close leads to distinctive patterns of physical change over time. Our propensity to learn from the same people leads to equivalent patterns of cultural change over the same time.

Learning Goal for Module 5:

Apply basic principles of divergent, convergent, and co-evolution, to both bodies and cultures.

Read: Handwerker, W Penn (2009) *The Origin of Cultures*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press. (Chapter 3)

Class Discussion Board: 1st post due Oct 11th – last response due Oct 15th

Why, despite the fact that we share nearly 100% of our genome with other people, do we exhibit different features today? What does that have to do with gene flow and selection? What effects of gene flow and selection may we see by the 22nd century (if we make it that far)?

Write on the following, due Oct 15th:

What does the history of languages tell us about what happens to human cultures and biology when (1) people with the same ancestors stay together, (2) people with the same ancestors go different ways and stop communicating, (3) people whose ancestors thought and acted very differently come to live in the same place and begin to interact freely, and (4) people whose ancestors thought and acted very differently come to live in the same place but treat each other as enemies? Provide examples from today's world.

Module 6. Lessons learned from the Agricultural Revolution

Our brains produce cultures in the normal course of their operation. Because the process means, at the level of consciousness, making guesses, we can't help but make mistakes. We search for an hour for glasses that we've been wearing all along. We overrate our abilities or underrate them. We write an equation incorrectly, as was one of the equations in Einstein's 1905 paper that introduced the world to Special Relativity. We misjudge people and find ourselves betrayed. The most notoriously unreliable evidence consists of eyewitness testimony. We can't see clearly, so we argue over whether or not the world's climate is undergoing a gradual warming. If we agree with the idea of global warming, we argue about why it began and what to do about it. Some people believe that the world is engaged in a war between radical fundamentalist Islam in the form of jihadists and civilization as we know it. Others don't. Larry Johnston, a former assistant director at the U.S. Department of State's Office of Counterterrorism argued persuasively in an op-ed in the *New York Times* on July 10, 2001, that the threat of terrorism was grossly overblown. Because each of us can draw only on our own limited prior experience, we don't see the world perfectly; we rely heavily on others to find our errors. But even when we have excellent advice and all the information necessary to see clearly, we make silly decisions, as Barbara Tuchman documented in her 1987 book *The March of Folly* beginning with the prototype decision by the Trojans to accept a gift horse filled with Greek warriors. *Even if we see choices clearly, we consistently fail to make rational decisions* – if we frame choices as involving gains, we over-estimate the risks involved; if we frame choices as involving loss, we under-estimate those risks. In fact, the more a living thing relies on this form of information processing, (call it 'intelligence'), the more mistakes it makes.

Mistakes can be good or bad, however. What counts are consequences, because they make a choice bad or good. Bad choices do us harm. Really bad choices kill us. Really good choices transform our life in wondrous ways. Some choices aren't really bad or good, except in particular circumstances or due to idiosyncratic whim, so beyond those concerns it doesn't matter whether we learn them or not. Things that we could learn and did learn are things that have a large balance of good-to-bad consequences. Things that we could learn and some did and some did not learn are of things that have either bad consequences in some historical situations and good consequences in others or have no consequence worth mentioning. Things that we could learn and did not are things that have a large balance of bad-to-good consequences.

Learning Goals for Module 6:

- (1) Apply an understanding of the limitations of human cognition and decision-making to choices that lead to cultural evolution – or extinction.
- (2) Apply the principles of cultural design to major forms of cultural evolution, including the design of foraging cultures and the evolution of these into cultures suitable for pastoralism and agriculture.

Read:

Mithen, Steven (2003) *After the Ice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard. (Select a region) ISBN: 067401999-7

Moran, Emilio F. (2006) *People and Nature*. Malden, MA: Blackwells. ISBN: 1-4051-0572-9 (Chapters 1-3)

Watch these films: *The Nuer* (Parts I & II)

Class Discussion Board: 1st post due Oct 18th – last response due Oct 22th

How did early people exercise choice? Do you really have choices? When and under what circumstances (specifically) do you NOT? How does your answer apply to early people?

Class Discussion Board: 1st post due Oct 25th – last response due Oct 29th

If cultures constitute designs that solve problems, how can all cultures be equal?

Write on the following, due Oct 29th:

What do we learn about human nature from our ancestors' responses to climate change 20,000 years ago? Imagine that you lived about 7000 years ago. Consider the problems you face as you shift from foraging to agriculture or pastoralism. Design a culture that solves those problems. Start with the following:

The year is 7000BP. You live in the East African grasslands just south of the Sahara where your grandfather and grandmother lived by hunting giraffes, antelope, warthogs, and rabbits, and gathering roots, berries, nuts, and grains. You need to decide how you will live. Will it be the same as your grandparents? If you decide to live differently, how will you organize your life?

These questions arise because domesticated crops and animals now exist. Where you live, 15-25 inches of rain fall annually. Unfortunately, this figure is an average. Some years, no rain falls; every year, some places receive no rain, or almost no rain. The unreliable rainfall makes farming unprofitable, but the rain that does fall supports a grassland savanna, so you can raise cattle in abundance. Everything you have comes from cattle. You eat their meat, drink their milk or blood or both, and use their hides. You can trade cattle or cattle-products with farmers for grain, cloth, iron, and other things you may need. Without cattle you will die; with them you can survive.

Of course, lions, leopards, and other predators like to eat cattle, and cattle die from old age, snake bites, disease, and droughts. To survive in a typical year, you must have at least 15 animals for each member of your group. Each cow needs pasturage, water, and salt. Because you live in a region of low rainfall, each cow must have access to at least 40 acres of land.

What can you do to reduce the risk of not having enough cattle to survive? What happens when an epidemic strikes, or at the end of a drought year, when you have lost most or all of your herd? How do you solve that problem? Do you want to move from place to place like your grandparents, or do you want to settle down and raise your animals in one place?

How many people do you want to belong to your group? Who do you want those people to be? (What people are most important for you?) What work tasks will people in your group have to perform? Will everyone do all tasks, or will you divide up the work? If you divide the work, how will you do so?

If you are a woman, what would be best when you marry: going to live with your husband in his group, or bringing him to live with you in your group? If you are a man, what would be best when you marry: going to live with your wife in her group, or bring her to live with you in your group?

Will individuals own cattle as property, or will everyone in the group have equal say over what will be done with any one animal? If individuals own cattle, will it be men, or women, or both? If people of one gender own cattle and people of the other gender don't, what happens to the people without cattle? If individual adults own cattle, how do their children come to own cattle?

What benefits exist, if any, from having 30 or 45 animals per person in your group, rather than the minimum number of 15? If you have 45 cattle per person, what do you feel about and how do you act toward a person who has only 10 cattle per person? If you have only 10 cattle per person, how do you feel? What will you do?

Behavior Rules:

1. don't do anything you don't have to (MINIMIZE ENERGY EXPENDITURE).
2. do anything you can to make your life better (better food and more of it, more comfortable living quarters, more freedom), emphasizing Now rather than the Future, which may never come (MAXIMIZE ACCESS TO RESOURCES).

Module 7. How life changed with the industrial free market revolution

Cultures, to judge from the last 300,000 years of human history, constitute resource management designs that, with varying success, provide for collective action to address specific sustainability problems. A resource management design that works well for foragers would fare badly for rice producers. A resource management design that works well for upland rice farmers spread thinly over the landscape would fare badly for dense populations dependent on wet rice production. Neither cultural design would work for pastoralists. The industrial free market revolution of 1780-1830 altered consequences of our choices in ways that continue to improve the lives of people all over the planet. Gross Domestic Product for the least-developed countries, for example, grew by a factor of 8 between 1970 and 2006. In these poorest countries in the world, life expectancy at birth grew by 38% between 1960 and 2006, and the child mortality rate was nearly cut in half. The premium placed on individual and organizational and cultural performance has reduced constraints on the appearance of new ideas, new ways of doing things, and the spread of information about new ideas and how to put them into operation. When competence counts, skin color, gender, and religion fade to insignificance. We shall look back at this time in history, I suspect, and see a transition from sharply stratified to more egalitarian global and regional relationships, despite the complexities of the leveling process and exceptions at specific times and places.

Learning Goal for Module 7:

Explore the evolutionary ecology created and continuing to change by processes set in motion with the industrial free market revolution.

Read:

Rummel, R.J. (1994) *Death by Government*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers Chapter 3: Pre-Twentieth Century Democide. <http://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/DBG.CHAP3.HTM>

Moran, Emilio F. (2006) *People and Nature*. Malden, MA: Blackwells. ISBN: 1-4051-0572-9 (Chapters 4-8)

Watch these films: *The Axe Fight*, *Dead Birds*, *The Cows of Dolo Ken Paye*

Class Discussion Board: 1st post due Nov 1st – last response due Nov 5th

Was Lord Acton right, that 'Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely?' If not why not? If so, what is it about power that seduces powerful people into taking advantage of others – exploiting them, hurting them, even killing them? What conditions concentrate power in specific people or specific groups? What conditions devolve power widely in populations? What effects come from the concentration or devolution of power?

Class Discussion Board: 1st post due Nov 8th – last response due Nov 12th

Wade (*Before the Dawn*) argues that more contemporary people are far less bloodthirsty than were our ancestors of 10s of 1000s of years ago. What evidence corresponds or does not correspond with this view? What combination of biological and/or cultural evolution explains why, if we changed or if we didn't?

Write on the following, due Nov 12th:

What is it about this most recent revolution that produced such profound improvements in human welfare that despite dramatic declines in the birth rate, from an average of more than 6 children to fewer than 2 over the course of a woman's reproductive career, the global population grew from only 2.2 billion people in the mid 20th century to nearly 7 billion people today?

...On Your Future?

Module 8. What's in your future and how do you know?

Human minds exhibit a propensity to seek evidence for what we already believe, or to foolishly choose what we wish was true even when we have abundant contradictory information. The Earth's climate appears to be in the midst of significant change, for example, but we can't tell for sure whether the next decade will see a dramatic rise in temperature or a new ice age. Change that occurs all the time, but unexpectedly and with unpredictable substance, compounds our ability to see and effectively deal with threats to our survival. We thus cannot now tell exactly what the problem will be, or what resources will be available, or what new things and ideas will exist that we can bring to bear on the solution. Indeed, the problem may change, or disappear, by the time we identify it precisely and work out a solution. Sometimes people produce change. One example consists of the unexpected growth in ethanol produced from corn (rather than from, say, corn *cobs*, kudzu, or switch grass), which created a world food crisis in 2008. Some changes occur without human intervention. One example consists of the mutation that unexpectedly produced UG99 (it was first found in Uganda in 1999), a wheat rust fungus now spreading rapidly in southwest Asia that threatens to devastate the region's wheat production. Sustainability problems arise from complexly related sets of variables at multiple scale levels and exhibit important non-linearities. Cultural institution design may produce, exacerbate, or minimize these problems. How can we increase our ability to respond effectively to the new and ongoing challenges that face our communities?

Learning Goals for Module 8:

- (1) Explore means for effectively overcoming the limitations of our evolved cognitive capacities for understanding and decision-making.
- (2) Examine means by which to enhance the sustainability of human communities.

Read:

Michaels, Patrick J. (2004) *Meltdown*. Washington, DC: Cato Institute. ISBN: 1-930865-79-1

<http://www.zo.utexas.edu/courses/THOC/exponential.growth.html>

<http://tierneylab.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/12/19/flawed-science-advice-for-obama/>

Class Discussion Board: 1st post due Nov 15th – last response due Nov 19th:

What would you like to change to make the world a better place? What will it take to create that change? How sure are you – what lessons should we take from systematic distortions like those about global warming? Maybe we need to rid the world of 90% of its current population? What does (will) it take to identify clearly and respond quickly and effectively to survival threats?

Write on the following, due Nov 19th:

How do alternative choices lead to alternative futures? How do your answers apply to the people whose descendants survived climate change? To the people who left no descendants to survive climate change? How can you best promote community sustainability?

Module 9. What's in your future and what do you plan to do about it?

This course began with the observation that the most important characteristic of human nature is that we cannot *not* create, live as a part of, and change cultures. Cultures are built into us. We can't wish cultures away. Our brains produce them in the normal course of their operation. Assumptions ground cultures and differentiate one from another. Assumptions have profound implications because they tell us what's right and what's wrong and which choices we should and should not make as we make our way through life. So, on what assumption(s) do you ground your life? With whom do you share these assumptions and with whom do you find conflicting assumptions? Where do your assumptions lead you? How will you respond to behavior predicated on conflicting assumptions?

Learning Goal for Module 9:

Apply your understanding of the origin, evolution, and characteristics of human nature to questions about how (and how well) you will live your life.

Read:

Dalrymple, Theodore (2001) *Life at the Bottom*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee. ISBN: 1-56663-505-5

Persad, G., A. Wertheimer, and E.J. Emanuel, Principles for allocation of scarce medical interventions. *The Lancet* 2009; 373: 423-31.

Class Discussion Board: 1st post due Dec 1th – last response due Dec 4th

Evaluate questions related to the following cultural norms,

- health care *should* be considered a fundamental human right.
- A woman *should* have the final say over her pregnancy.

If 'health care' is a right, why wasn't it recognized in Ancient Greece, or in England in 1780? If 'health care' is a right, why wasn't it recognized in Ancient Greece, or in England in 1780? If a woman should not have a final say over her pregnancy, why was it practiced in Ancient Greece – indeed, in every human community we know of? How did the idea of 'health-care-as-a-right' come into existence – in response to the overpopulation and over-consumption that threatens to destroy our planet, which abortion helped control in earlier human societies? Why should people not be left to die on the street – other than that they have a right to health care? If health care is so important, to save the 30,000 people who otherwise die, shouldn't we develop a market in human kidneys? If you should not be forced to participate in a market for kidneys why should you be forced to participate in the market for infants we call 'adoption'? Why does health care depend on what government says you can have? Should rights like 'free speech,' 'freedom of assembly,' depend on what government says you can have? Where do 'rights' come from and what's the relationship between your rights and government?

Class Discussion Board: 1st post due Dec 4th – last response due Dec 10th

If it's true, as Ortega y Gasset observed, that the absence of standards is the beginning of barbarism, to what standards should you hold yourself and why? To what standards should you hold others, and why? How do your answers apply to our forager ancestors? To the people whose descendants survived climate change? To the people who left no descendants who survived climate change?

Write on the following – due Finals Week:

Who knows what's best for you? Identify 6 norms to which your answer leads that bear on important public issues and explain the implication of holding to these norms. Under what circumstances should you defend your assumption and the norms to which they lead?