

## Anthropology 305: Evolution of Religion

T 5:00-8:00

Beach Hall 404

Spring 2008

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office hrs: Th 3:30-5:30 and by appointment

This class is a graduate-level course in the evolution of religion. The principal purpose of the class is to introduce students to the current theories and research examining the evolution of religion. The class will have a seminar format. This means that all students are *required* to read all assigned readings *before* the class, and must be *prepared to discuss* them in class. Preparation for discussion implies both note-taking and time allocated to synthesizing the material. Students should expect to be called on and to evidence preparation for discussion. The general tone of the discussion should be supportive of a free exchange of ideas. Approximately 60% of the grade for the class will be based on the *quality* of class participation. The remainder of the grade (40%) will be based on a research project, which will be discussed during the first class.

Course Topics and Reading Assignments (other topics and readings will be added based on student interests):

### ***Theological Incorrectness***

Barrett, J. & Keil, F. 1996. Conceptualizing a non-natural entity. *Cognitive Psychology* 31:219-247.

Barrett, J. 1998. Cognitive Constraints on Hindu Concepts of the Divine *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 37:608-619

### ***Counter-Intuitive Concepts and Supernatural Belief***

Boyer, P. 2000. Functional origins of religious concepts. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 6:195-214.

Boyer, P., & Ramble, C. 2001. Cognitive templates for religious concepts. *Cognitive Science* 25:535-564.

Atran, S., & Norenzayan, A. 2004. Religion's Evolutionary Landscape: Counterintuition, Commitment, Compassion, Communion. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 27:713-770.

Norenzayan, A., Atran, S., Faulkner, J., & Schaller, M. 2006. Memory and mystery: The cultural selection of minimally counterintuitive narratives. *Cognitive Science*, 30, 531-553.

### ***Afterlife Beliefs***

Bering, J. 2006. The folk psychology of souls. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 29:453-493.

Norenzayan, A. & I. Hansen 2006. Belief in supernatural agents in the face of death *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 32:174-187

### ***Supernatural Belief and Prosociality***

Shariff, A. & A. Norenzayan. 2007. God is watching you: supernatural agent concepts increase prosocial behavior in an anonymous economic game. *Psychological Science*.

Rossano, M. 2007. Supernaturalizing social life. *Human Nature*

Sanderson, S. & W. Roberts 2008. The evolutionary forms of religious life: a cross-cultural, quantitative analysis. *American Anthropologist*

### ***Supernatural Punishment***

Johnson, D. 2005 God's punishment and public goods: a test of the supernatural punishment hypothesis in 186 world cultures. *Human Nature* 16:410-446.

Johnson, D. & J. Bering. 2006. Hand of God, Mind of Man: Punishment and Cognition in the Evolution of Cooperation. *Evolutionary Psychology* 4:219-233.

Boehm, C. 2008. A biocultural evolutionary exploration of supernatural sanctioning In *The Evolution of Religion*, ed. Bulbulia et al., pp. 143-150.

### ***Adaptationist versus By-Product Scenarios***

Kirkpatrick, L. 2008. Religion is not an adaptation: some fundamental issues and arguments

Richerson, P. and L. Newson 2008. Is religion adaptive? Yes, no, maybe, but mostly we don't know.

Harris, E. and P. McNamara 2008. Is religiousness a biocultural adaptation?

Sanderson, S. 2008. Adaptation, Evolution, and Religion. *Religion*.

### ***Multilevel Selection***

Wilson, DS. 2005. Testing major theories about the evolution of religion with a random sample. *Human Nature* 16:382-409.

### ***Signaling Theory and Religion***

- Bulbulia, J. 2004. Religious costs as adaptations that signal altruistic intention. *Evolution and Cognition* 10:19-42.
- Bulbulia, J. 2008. Free love: religious solidarity on the cheap. In *The Evolution of Religion*, ed. Bulbulia et al., pp. 153-159.
- Irons, W. 2004. An Evolutionary Critique of the Created Co-Creator Concept. *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* 39:773-790.
- Soler, M. 2008. Commitment costs and cooperation: evidence from Candomble, and Afro-Brazilian religion
- Schloss, J. 2008. He who laughs best: involuntary religious affect as a solution to recursive cooperative defection. In *The Evolution of Religion*, ed. Bulbulia et al., pp. 197-206.

### ***Ritual***

- Leinard, P. and P. Boyer 2006. Whence collective rituals? A cultural selection model of ritualized behavior. *American Anthropologist* 108: 814-827
- Boyer, P. and P. Leinard 2006. Why ritualized behavior in humans? *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*.
- Barrett, J. and T. Lawson 2001. Ritual Intuitions: Cognitive Contributions to Judgments of Ritual Efficacy. *Journal of Culture and Cognition* 1:183-201.

### ***Morality***

- Miller, G. 2007. Sexual selection for moral virtues. *The Quarterly Review of Biology* 82:97-125.

### ***Religion and Violence***

- Hansen, I. G., & Norenzayan, A. 2006. Between yang and yin and heaven and hell: Untangling the complex relationship between religion and intolerance. In: (P. McNamara, Ed.), *Where God and Science Meet Vol. 3*, pp. 187-211.
- Bushman, B. et al. 2007. When God sanctions killing. *Psychological Science*.
- Ginges, J., Atran, S., & Medin, D. 2007. Sacred bounds on rational resolution of violent political conflict. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 104, 7357-7360.

### ***Magic and Superstition***

- Beck, J. and Forstmeier, W. 2007. Superstition and belief as inevitable by-products of an adaptive learning strategy. *Human Nature* 18:35-46.

### ***Ontogeny***

- Alcotra, C. 2006. Religion and the life course: is adolescence an experience expectant period for religious transmission? In *Where God and Science Meet*, vol. 1, pp. 55-79.
- Kelemen, D. 2004. Are children "intuitive theists"? Reasoning about purpose and design in nature. *Psychological Science*, 15, 295-301.
- Kelemen, D., Callanan, M., Casler, K. & Pérez-Granados, D. R. 2005. Why things happen: Teleological explanation in parent-child conversations. *Developmental Psychology*, 251-264.

### ***Health and the Evolution of Religion***

- Bulbulia, J. 2006. Nature's Medicine: Religiosity as an adaptation for health and cooperation. In *Where God and Science Meet*, vol. 1, pp. 87-121.
- McNamara, P. et al. 2001. Relation of religiosity and scores on fluency tests to subjective reports of health in older individuals *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 13:279-251.

### ***Demography***

- Blume, M. 2007. The reproductive benefits of religiosity.
- Deady, D. 2006. Is priesthood an adaptive strategy? Evidence from a historical Irish population. *Human Nature* 17: 393-404

### ***Evolutionary Scenarios***

- M. Rossano 2006. The religious mind and the evolution of religion. *Review of General Psychology* 10: 346-364.
- Dennett, D. 2006. Chapters 5-7 (pp. 116-199) in *Breaking the Spell: Religion as Natural Phenomenon*.