

BIOL 350

Evolution and Human Affairs

Fall Term (F24)

CALENDAR DESCRIPTION

An exploration of how evolutionary thinking can affect our understanding of our lives, our species, and our ability to share the planet with other species.

LEARNING HOURS 120 (36L;24O;60P)

PREREQUISITE Level 3 or above.

SCHEDULE

Refer to SOLUS for details.

Office Hours	TBA
TA:	See onQ Website
TA Contact Information	See onQ Website
Office Hours	TBA

Course Outline

The 'project' of civilization is failing. If we want to know where we are headed, we need to understand how the past brought us to where we are now. In BIOL350, we examine the evolutionary roots of human motivation, social life, culture, and civilization, the evolutionary roots of the challenges that currently face our species, and hence the evolutionary roots of our future. Students explore how biological and cultural evolution interact in affecting how we think and behave, and hence how this interaction affects our understanding of a wide range of human affairs, including why we have arrived at our present predicament – the 'human condition'. An appreciation of this historical human journey is essential for guiding a new and improved Project of Civilization to replace the old one. Students in BIOL350 have an opportunity to be among the architects of this new project.

Darwinian evolution by natural selection is a major underlying theme, but students do not require a background in biology; the level of knowledge needed concerning biological evolution is presented during the course. Students from Biology and other programs are all encouraged to take the course.

Textbooks/Readings

Aarssen LW (2022) *What We Are: The Evolutionary Roots of Our Future*. Springer-Nature, Cham, Switzerland. [Available as an ebook from Queen's Campus Bookstore in time for the start of classes: Book Description: <https://link.springer.com/book/9783031058783>]

Other reference and required reading materials are provided in connection with lectures and available from online sources.

Learning outcomes

After completing BIOL350, students will be better equipped to:

1. identify and define the urgent challenges facing human civilization today, and why many authorities warn that ‘business as usual’ cannot be sustained;
2. describe how and why the effects of Darwinian evolution have brought us to this critical stage in the history of humanity;
3. explain how an understanding of this ‘human journey’ helps to account for a wide range of contemporary human affairs and cultural norms;
4. evaluate why philosopher, Blaise Pascal considered that, “*All of humanity's problems stem from man's inability to sit quietly in a room alone*” (Pensées, 1670) — and why poet, T.S. Eliot mused, “*...humankind cannot bear very much reality*” (No. 1 of Four Quartets, 1943) — and why philosopher Albert Camus (1956) wrote: “*Man is the only creature who refuses to be what he is.*”
5. predict how the genetic legacies inherited from our ancestors, and how our continuing evolution as a species — informed by both natural selection and cultural selection — are likely to affect our human natures, our social lives, and our cultures in future generations;
6. participate in prescribing a way forward for the design of a new, more sustainable, and more humanistic model of civilization for our descendants.

Learning Hours

<i>Teaching method</i>		<i>Average hours per week</i>	<i>Number of weeks</i>	<i>Total hours</i>
In-class hours	Lecture (live)	3	12	36
	Seminar			
	Laboratory			
	Tutorial			
	Practicum			
	Group learning			
	Individual instruction			
Other	Online activity	2	12	24
	Off-campus activity			
	Private study	5	12	60
Total hours on task				120

Grading Scheme

Component	Weight (%)	Date
Participation in online discussion	10	TBA
Poster assignment	15	TBA
Final Exam*	75*	TBA
<p>* IMPORTANT NOTE: students can reduce the weight of the final exam by as much as 25% (bringing its weight down to 50%) depending on the extent to which students choose to access (or are able to access) important learning outcomes available from in-class attendance / participation, recorded by iClicker reef polling. In other words, the weight of the final exam is not increased by failing to attend/participate in class. Rather, the weight of the final exam is decreased by optional in-class</p>		

attendance/participation. ***Importantly then, students who enrol in this course, and anticipate that they may need to miss some lecture attendance/participation, must be willing to accept that the more lecture attendance/participation that is missed (regardless of the reason), the greater will be the weight of the final exam. Accordingly, if lecture attendance/participation is missed because of a disability, the greater weight of the final exam represents an automatic accommodation for this.***

Grading Method

For all components of evaluation, including the final course mark, letter grades only will be reported — consistent with Queen’s Official Grade Conversion Scale shown below.

Queen’s Official Grade Conversion Scale

Grade	Numerical Course Average (Range)
A+	90-100
A	85-89
A-	80-84
B+	77-79
B	73-76
B-	70-72
C+	67-69
C	63-66
C-	60-62
D+	57-59
D	53-56
D-	50-52
F	49 and below

Academic Integrity and Queen’s Code of Conduct

Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the regulations concerning academic integrity, and for ensuring that their assignments and conduct conform to the principles of academic integrity. Information is available in the Arts and Science Calendar (see Academic Regulation 1 - <https://www.queensu.ca/academic-calendar/arts-science/academic-regulations/>), on the Arts and Science website (see <https://www.queensu.ca/artsci/undergrad-students/student-services/academic-integrity>), at the Biology Dept website (<https://biology.queensu.ca/current-students/undergraduate-students/student-resources>), and from the instructor of this course. Departures from academic integrity include plagiarism, use of unauthorized materials, facilitation, forgery and falsification, and are antithetical to the development of an academic community at Queen’s.

Given the seriousness of these matters, actions which contravene the regulations on academic integrity carry sanctions that can range from loss of grades or to course failure. In the most serious cases, a student will be required to withdraw from the university.

Academic Consideration and Accommodation Policy, Exam Conflicts, and Other Conflicts

Students who feel they require academic consideration or accommodation for illnesses, disabilities or

other extenuating circumstances, or have a conflict between exams or other commitments must submit an application to <https://www.queensu.ca/artsci/undergrad-students/student-services/academic-consideration-for-students>. If approved, the course coordinators will receive confirmation of the Academic Consideration or Accommodation request and alternate arrangements will be made. Students are encouraged to be proactive in anticipating difficulties, when it is possible to do so.

Students may also apply to <https://www.queensu.ca/artsci/undergrad-students/student-services/academic-consideration-for-students> to write a make-up or deferred exam, if they have an exam conflict as defined in the Academic Regulations of the Faculty (See Arts and Science Calendar Regulation 8 - <https://www.queensu.ca/academic-calendar/arts-science/academic-regulations/>). In this case, the student should report to the Exams Office first to verify that there is a genuine exam conflict. Biology professors will not consider your situation to be a conflict unless it has been confirmed by the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

Students may request a make-up or deferred exam if they have an exam conflict with off-campus travel associated with a field course (e.g. BIOL-307/3.0 or 407/3.0) that is held during the fall or winter terms.

Accommodation of Disabilities

Queen's University is committed to achieving full accessibility for persons with disabilities. Part of this commitment includes arranging academic accommodations for students with disabilities to ensure they have an equitable opportunity to participate in all of their academic activities. If you are a student with a disability and think you may need accommodations, you are strongly encouraged to contact the Student Wellness Services Office and register as early as possible. For more information, including important deadlines, please visit the website at: <http://www.queensu.ca/studentwellness/>

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