

Spring 2014

Bioanthropology Journal Club (ANG 6905)

Time/Place: W9 TUR B304

Instructor: Dr. David Daegling

Website: lss.at.ufl.edu (e-Learning)

The Bioanthropology Journal Club (BJC) discusses recently published (within the last two years) peer-reviewed papers directly pertinent to biological anthropology. A discussion leader each week will present a paper of their choosing and lead participants in critical evaluation of the paper. Participants will be expected to (1) have read the article and (2) contribute to discussion. The theme of papers is open but must focus on topics pertaining to biological anthropology. Students are evaluated on 1) the thoroughness of presentation of their chosen papers, 2) their leading of discussion of that paper and 3) participation in discussion during weeks in which the student is not presenting.

Though each week represents a new paper and potentially a new topic, in our final meeting, participants will gather to synthesize topics/papers reviewed and reassess current research and publishing trends in the field. Class participation consists of contributing to the discussion each week and at least once in the semester.

Papers chosen must be of reasonable length (≤ 10 pages), and be directly relevant to Evolutionary Anthropology (not the other subdisciplines of anthropology), with emphasis on:

evolution
primate organismal biology
the fossil record
major prehistoric events
other topics broadly related to human evolution

Review papers are inappropriate, and as mentioned, papers should not be older than two years. Each participant will directly upload their article one week prior to their presentation in .pdf format to the Sakai website Resources folder

If necessary, contact the instructor for help in choosing a paper.

Each lead participant should have several talking points around which to structure the discussion of their chosen paper. These points can be posted on the website for consideration by the rest of the class prior discussion, if desired.

Discussion leaders should first summarize the paper (briefly, presumably everyone has read the paper prior to the meeting) and then move into leading an active discussion perhaps with some provocative talking points. Participants should be conscious not to dominate any week's discussion.

Some Discussion Guidelines

1. What is the scientific merit of the paper and does this paper make a new and valuable contribution to the field? If so, what is the contribution? If not, why was this paper published?

2. What is the theoretical framework of the study and the importance of the hypotheses tested or questions addressed? What essential assumptions do the authors/researchers make?
3. Do you understand the experimental/investigational design (controls, etc.)? How would you characterize it? Are there ways the experiment/investigation could have been improved? Did the experimental design/investigation even address their research question?
4. How do you find the presentation of the statistical analyses and results? Does this accurately represent their findings and do they accurately represent their statistics?
5. What are their interpretations of the data and are they justified? What are the implications of their interpretations?
6. Are there alternative interpretations? Do you interpret their results differently either because of [1] a different understanding of their assumptions made in their experimental/investigational design, [2] the interpretations of their results, or [3] that there are different implications to draw from their results.
7. Did you learn anything new? If not, why did the authors write this paper?
8. Why is this article in this journal? Here is a complementary perspective to critical thinking aimed at novice journal club participants:

(taken from p. 23 of the Intro to Biological Anthropology textbook by Jurmain et al. (2012))

1. What data are presented?
2. What conclusions are presented, and how are they organized (as tentative hypotheses or as more dogmatic assertions)?
3. Are these views simply the authors' opinions, or are they supported by a larger body of research?
4. What are the research findings? Are they adequately documented?
5. Is the information consistent with information that you already possess? If not, can the inconsistencies be explained?
6. Are the conclusions (hypotheses) testable? How might one go about testing the various hypotheses that are presented?
7. If new research findings are at odds with previous hypotheses (or theories), must these hypotheses now be modified (or completely rejected)?
8. How do your own personal views bias you in interpreting the results?
9. Once you've identified your own biases, are you able to set them aside in order to evaluate the information objectively?
10. Can you discuss both the pros and cons of a scientific topic in an evenhanded manner?

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office (DSO). The DSO will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students experiencing personal problems that are interfering with their academic performance are encouraged to contact the University Counseling Center (301 Peabody Hall, 392-1575), Student Mental Health (Student Health Care Center, 392-1171), or Sexual Assault Recovery Services (Student Health Care Center, 392-1161).