

Bioanthropology Journal Club (ANG 6905)

Spring 2014

Time/Place: W Period 10 (5:10-6:00pm), TUR B304

Instructor: Dr. David Daegling (daegling@ufl.edu)

Facilitator: Susan Lad (slad@ufl.edu)

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

Structure and Expectations:

The Bioanthropology Journal Club (BJC) will meet every week (time to be determined) to discuss recently published (within the last two years) peer-reviewed papers directly pertinent to biological anthropology. Class meetings will be held in an informal discussion-style, featuring a single discussion leader each week presenting a paper of their choosing and leading the discussion. Participants will be expected (1) to have read the article and (2) to contribute to discussion (to the best of their abilities).

The theme is not narrow, but is focused on topics pertaining to biological anthropology. 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—choosing an article and serving as discussion leader for a paper.

Choosing an article:

Articles must be thoughtfully chosen—we trust each participant to choose a paper that will engender an interesting discussion—be of reasonable length (≤ 10 pages), and be directly relevant to Evolutionary Anthropology (*not* the other sub-disciplines of biological anthropology; emphasis on evolution, primate organismal biology, the fossil record, major prehistoric events, and 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 or e-mail it to the BJC Facilitator (Susan Lad) so that she can upload the paper to the Sakai website Resources folder. Details each week will be posted in the Calendar and Resources folder in e-Learning (<https://lss.at.ufl.edu>). If necessary, contact the facilitator for help in choosing a paper.

Discussion:

Each lead participant should have several talking points around which to structure the discussion of his or her chosen paper. These points can be posted on the website for consideration by the rest of the class prior discussion, if desired, by contacting the BJC Facilitator although this is not required. 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. It is the belief of the facilitator—and should be that of each participant—that all club members have something unique and interesting to offer. Additionally, we should be conscious not to talk-over one another in trying to make our points.

Some BJC Reading & Discussion Guidelines

For each paper think about and be prepared to comment on the following:

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? “Let us remember to not make perfect the enemy of good, but it is okay to make good the enemy of crap.” –J.D. Pampush
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 or [2] 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? Why was this paper published?
8. Why was this article published in this particular 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?

Additional Information:

I. Disability Statement:

The Disability Resource Center coordinates the needed accommodations of students with disabilities. This includes registering disabilities, recommending academic accommodations within the classroom, accessing special adaptive computer equipment, providing interpretation services and mediating faculty-student disability related issues. Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with

the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation
0001 Reid Hall, 352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/

II. Academic Misconduct:

“Academic misconduct” is defined as any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the institution of learning, or to subvert the educational process in any way. Cheating, copying other’s work, plagiarism, and other acts of academic misconduct are unethical. UF and the instructor consider these to be serious offenses. All students are responsible for knowing what constitutes academic misconduct; ignorance is not a valid excuse. Alleged cases of academic misconduct will be referred to the proper university committees. There will be a zero tolerance policy in effect.

III. Absences:

Every effort should be made to attend each meeting. In the event of an emergency, serious personal injury or illness, official school related function, or attendance at academic conferences you will be excused, should the appropriate documentation be provided. It is the student’s responsibility to contact the instructor and inform them of the emergency either before the class or within a 24-hour period following the missed class. You may e-mail the instructor or leave a message in the Department of Anthropology Office.

IV. Harassment and Discrimination:

“Harassment” is defined as conduct that (1) is of any type (written, oral, graphic, or physical) (2) is directed towards or against a person because of their personal status (i.e. race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, political affiliation, national origin, age, disability, marital status, pregnancy or others) and that (3) unreasonably interferes with the individual’s work, education, or participation in activities or programs at UF or creates a working or learning environment that a reasonable person would find threatening. “Discrimination” is defined as a conduct that (1) adversely affects any aspect of an individual’s employment, education, or participation in activities or programs at UF, and (2) is based on one or more personal characteristics listed above. Any student who feels their rights have been violated are asked to confront the offending party, should that not resolve the issue, or the student is uncomfortable with confronting the offending party they may file a complaint with UF Department of Human Resources.

VI. Cell phones, computers and touch pads:

Use of cell phones, computers and touch pads will not be actively policed. However, students are asked to please be respectful their fellow journal club members who will not appreciate continued distractions.