Anthropology 543  
Seminar: Human Biological Variation  

Spring 2012  

COURSE SYLLABUS  

Instructor: Michael A. Little  
Office: Science 1-102, tel. 777-2732, email mlittle@binghamton.edu  
Time, Place: Wed 8:30 -11:30 pm, Sci. 1, Rm. 143 (Anth. Conf. Rm.)  
Office Hours: Wed 2:00-3:00 pm and by appointment  

Course Objectives:  

Two important characteristics of members of our species are extraordinary variation and adaptability. Anthropology 543 is a course designed to explore processes and origins of human biological variation and adaptation. Sources of variations are developmental, phenotypic, hereditary, gender, individual, population, evolutionary, ecological, sociocultural, and random (probabilistic, stochastic). What sets us apart from other mammalian species and contributes to further variation is our complex form of human behavior known as culture. The focus of the course is on how humans respond and adapt to the environment. These responses are viewed within a biocultural perspective; that is, with the knowledge that human biology must always be explored within behavioral and cultural contexts. Accordingly, the forces and process that contribute to human biobehavioral variation are evolutionary/genetic, developmental/historical/life-experience, and cultural/behavioral.  

Learning Objectives (NYS Law):  

The principal learning objectives of this seminar are to contribute to your knowledge of living human population variation, and hence, your awareness of the value of the four-field approach (sociocultural, linguistic, archaeological, and biological anthropology) to anthropological understanding.  

Course Format:  

Classes will be a 3-hour lecture/discussion session with punctuated student reports. Evaluation will be based on an in-class midterm examination (25 %), an in-class report (30 %), a take-home final examination (30 %), and class participation in discussions (15 %).  

Academic & Professional Honesty & Behavior:  

Graduate seminars are identified as vehicles for professional training. Therefore, you, as junior professional anthropologists, will be expected to behave accordingly – attend class regularly, inform the seminar leader in advance of an absence, be prepared for discussion, and, particularly, be prepared for in-class reports. Professional honesty standards require that all of your work be your own, and that any published or unpublished contributions (discussions, mss., communications, etc) to your work by others be acknowledged/cited. Plagiarism, either intentional or unintentional, is to be avoided at all costs. On the other hand, you are encouraged to exchange ideas and collaborate with your class colleagues. The
only exceptions to such exchanges are during examinations (in-class and take-home), in-class reports/presentations, and term papers (none required for this seminar).

**Required Text:**


The second edition of *Human Biology* is a text that was produced for the Human Biology Association and to which a number of key members of the profession of biological anthropology contributed. The most difficult chapters to comprehend are likely to be the three genetics chapters (3, 4, & 5) and the demography chapter (14). You should probably read each of these chapters at least twice. The materials covered in the book are timely and state of the art for ca. 2011.

There are two other texts that I have used in the past that are both well-done and can be mined for ideas and references. Mielke et al. is heavily genetic, while Muehlenbein is just heavy (comprehensive). They are not required reading, but are mentioned for reference.


**Other Readings:**

Additional readings are designed to supplement the Stinson collection. These articles are mostly "review papers" with bibliographies that are quite comprehensive. They will be available as attachments either through email or Blackboard. I’ll try to have pdf copies on Blackboard for you.


[Plus additional articles to be assigned during the semester.]

**In-Class Reports:**

Class presentations will be given throughout the semester, beginning after the first few weeks. These reports will be designed to deal with a specific biological anthropologist from a list below. Reports will provide (1) a brief biography, (2) major contributions to studies of human variation, and (3) a description of two papers with commentary on methods and findings. Reports will each consist of a 20-minute presentation with a 10-minute discussion (led by the presenter) to follow.

**Class Schedule:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week/Date</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Assigned Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[1] Feb 1</td>
<td>Introduction; Scope of the Science; Evolution</td>
<td>S 1; Baker 1997</td>
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<tr>
<td>[4] Feb 22</td>
<td>Human Genetics History and Overview</td>
<td>S 3, 4, 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>[8] Mar 21</td>
<td>MIDTERM EXAMINATION (1 1/2 hours)</td>
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Discussion of Little and Garruto 2000

Mar 31-Apr 9 SPRING BREAK
Apr 10-14 AAPA/HBA MEETINGS
[10] Apr 18 Climatic adaptation: Altitude and S 6
Solar Radiation
[12] May 2 Health and Disease S 9, 10
May 9-14 TAKE-HOME EXAM (two-day block)

Names of Biological Anthropologists for Reports (Pick one)

Paul T. Baker
Joseph Birdsell
Barry Bogin
Alice M. Brues
Michael Crawford
Darna L. Dufour
Jonathan Friedlaender
A. Roberto Frisancho
Stanley M. Garn
Jere D. Haas
Geoffrey Harrison
Frederick Hulse
Solomon Katz
Wilton M. Krogman
Gabriel W. Lasker

Frank B. Livingstone
Robert Malina
James J. McKenna
Lorna G. Moore
Marshall Newman
Catherine Panter-Brick
John Relethford
Derek F. Roberts
William Stini
A. Theodore Steegmann, Jr.
Emoke Szathmary
James M. Tanner
Kenneth Weiss
James Wood