

COURSE OUTLINE - Winter 2026

AN2050(A3): Introduction to Biological Anthropology - 3 (3-0-0) 45 Hours for 15 Weeks

Northwestern Polytechnic acknowledges that our campuses are located on Treaty 8 territory, the ancestral and present-day home to many diverse First Nations, Metis, and Inuit people. We are grateful to work, live and learn on the traditional territory of Duncan's First Nation, Horse Lake First Nation and Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation, who are the original caretakers of this land.

We acknowledge the history of this land and we are thankful for the opportunity to walk together in friendship, where we will encourage and promote positive change for present and future generations.

INSTRUCTOR: Matt Longstaffe **PHONE:** (780) 539-2710
OFFICE: C402 **E-MAIL:** m.longstaffe@nwpolytech.ca
OFFICE HOURS: Wednesdays, 12:30 – 14:00

CALENDAR DESCRIPTION: This course covers the basics of our origins and all the spectacular biological diversity we see around us in the modern human species, from an anthropological perspective. Students will be introduced to fundamental concepts in evolutionary theory, genetics, demography, and the various ways that human diversity has been understood and interpreted. This course is an exciting overview of humans, biologically, from our origins to who we are today.

PREREQUISITE(S):
None

COREQUISITE(S):
None

REQUIRED MATERIALS:
Shook et al. (2023) Explorations: An Open Invitation to Biological Anthropology, 2nd Ed., OER. <https://pressbooks.calstate.edu/explorationsbioanth2/>

DELIVERY MODE(S): On-Campus

LEARNING OUTCOMES:
By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Describe the differences between scientific and non-scientific viewpoints with respect to fundamental topics such as human origins, race, etc.
- Explain the basics of evolutionary theory and human genetics.
- Demonstrate an understanding of and describe the human evolutionary record.
- Explain what non-human primates can tell us about ourselves and the world.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the scientific position on human biodiversity.
- Describe the relevance of biological anthropology to the modern world.
- Apply critical thinking skills to access, evaluate, and interpret information to draw conclusions and shape arguments.
- Demonstrate a scholarly mindset that is open to different perspectives, acknowledges the provisional nature of knowledge, and identify the limits of research and understanding within the discipline of anthropology.
- Express ideas clearly and effectively in writing.
- Act with honesty and integrity to both complete academic work and conduct themselves in an academic environment.

TRANSFERABILITY:

Please consult the Alberta Transfer Guide for more information. You may check to ensure the transferability of this course at the Alberta Transfer Guide main page <http://www.transferalberta.alberta.ca>

** For courses with alpha (letter) grading, a grade of D or D+ may not be acceptable for transfer to other post-secondary institutions. **Students are cautioned that it is their responsibility to contact the receiving institutions to ensure transferability**

EVALUATIONS:

Assessment	Weight
10 reading quizzes, 5 points each, for 50 points total	25%
3 lab/ reflective activities, 30 points each, for 90 points total	45%
Final exam for 60 points total	30%
Total = 200 points	100%
Note: All points are weighted equally for 200 points total	

Reading Quizzes (10 reading quizzes at 5 points each for 50 points total)

You will be given 10 reading quizzes covering your syllabus and chapters in our textbook throughout the semester. Each quiz will consist of a small number of questions (multiple choice, matching, etc.) and are intended to encourage you to keep up with your readings. They are not worth a whole lot of points in the grand scheme of things but could mean the difference between one letter grade and the next; don't let them slip past you! **Reading Quizzes are to be completed on our myClass page, will open Mondays at 8 am of the week assigned, and close Sundays at 11:59 pm (see due dates on schedule).**

Lab/Reflective Activities (3 activities at 30 points each for 90 points total)

Lab/Reflective activities are intended to engage your critical thinking skills in an application of course content. While the requirements of these assignments vary significantly with the topics covered and resources available, they are each intended to give you an opportunity for hands-on exploration of specific methods or concepts covered in your lectures and readings. **Activities are to be completed on our myClass page and will open Mondays at 8 am of the week assigned and close Sundays at 11:59 pm (see due dates on schedule). Don't worry, no prep work is required (we'll cover it in class)!**

Final Exam (60 points total)

You will have a scheduled final exam in this class; HOWEVER, your exam WILL NOT require you to be physically present on campus. Your exam is a TAKE HOME. As we will be invoking concepts that are foundational to the discipline of anthropology, it WILL build on the material covered throughout the course. Your final exam will be worth 70 points and consist of an essay question and response that will be provided in advance. **Your final is to be completed on our myClass page and will open on Monday (at 8 am) of the last week of scheduled classes. The exam is due and will close by 11:59 pm on the date scheduled by the registrar. I will let you know when this information is available.**

GRADING CRITERIA:

Please note that most institutions will not accept your course for transfer credit IF your grade is less than C-.

Grading Chart

Alpha Grade	4-point Equivalent	Percentage Guidelines	Alpha Grade	4-point Equivalent	Percentage Guidelines
A+	4.0	95-100	C+	2.3	67-69
A	4.0	85-94	C	2.0	63-66
A-	3.7	80-84	C-	1.7	60-62
B+	3.3	77-79	D+	1.3	55-59
B	3.0	73-76	D	1.0	50-54
B-	2.7	70-72	F	0.0	00-49

COURSE SCHEDULE/TENTATIVE TIMELINE:

Week	Date	Topic(s)	Reading(s)
Getting Started			
1.2	Jan 7	Introduction to the course. What is biological anthropology?	Syllabus & Introduction Chapter 1
Homework: Reading Quiz 1 – Due Sunday Jan 11, 11:59 PM			
Module 1: Basic Principles in Biological Anthropology			
2.1	Jan 12	The development of evolutionary theory	Chapter 2
2.2	Jan 14		
Homework: Reading Quiz 2 – Due Sunday Jan 18, 11:59 PM			
3.1	Jan 19	The biological basis of human variation	Chapter 3
3.2	Jan 21		
Homework: Lab/Reflective Activity 1 – Due Sunday Jan 25, 11:59 PM			
4.1	Jan 26	From variant to species	Chapter 4
4.2	Jan 28		
Homework: Reading Quiz 3 – Due Sunday Feb 1, 11:59 PM			
Module 2: Primatology			
5.1	Feb 2	What it means to be a primate	Chapter 5
5.2	Feb 4		
Homework: Reading Quiz 4 – Due Sunday Feb 8, 11:59 PM			
6.1	Feb 9	Primate Behavioural Ecology	Chapter 6
6.2	Feb 11		
Homework: Reading Quiz 5 – Due Sunday Feb 22, 11:59 PM			
7.1	Feb 16	Reading Break – No Classes	
7.2	Feb 18		
8.1	Feb 23	Primate Evolution	Chapters 7 & 8
8.2	Feb 25		
Homework: Reading Quiz 6 – Due Sunday Mar 1, 11:59 PM			
Module 3: Paleoanthropology			
9.1	Mar 2	What is means to be a hominin	
9.2	Mar 4		
Homework: Lab/Reflective Activity 2 – Due Sunday Mar 8, 11:59 PM			
10.1	Mar 9	Hominin origins: from ape to Australopithecine	Chapter 9
10.2	Mar 11		
Homework: Reading Quiz 7 – Due Sunday Mar 15, 11:59 PM			
11.1	Mar 16	The emergence of the genus Homo	Chapter 10
11.2	Mar 18		
Homework: Reading Quiz 8 – Due Sunday Mar 22, 11:59 PM			
12.1	Mar 23	The advent of humanity and anatomically modern humans	Chapters 11 & 12
12.2	Mar 25		
Homework: Reading Quiz 9 – Due Sunday Mar 29, 11:59 PM			
13.1	Mar 30	Beyond bone and stone	Chapter 13 & 14
13.2	Apr 1		
Homework: Reading Quiz 10 – Due Sunday Apr 5, 11:59 PM			

14.1	Apr 6	Biological anthropology as applied science	Chapter 15
14.2	Apr 8		
Homework: Lab/Reflective Activity 3 – Sunday April 12, 11:59 PM			
Final Exam – Date TBD			

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

Late Assignment/Make-up Policy: You are expected to follow the schedule as posted and **late assignments will not be accepted, except with my permission.** Make note of the due dates (and as you see, there is a lot of flexibility to complete and submit the assignment, BEFORE the due date)

Attendance and Participation: Attendance will not be taken, and no part of your grade is directly tied to attendance/participation. You are paying good money for this class and committing a significant amount of time to it. To get the most for your money and effort, **attendance is strongly encouraged.**

Classroom Climate Expectations: To create and maintain a safe and productive learning environment in the classroom, standards of behaviours are expected as follows:

1. **Listen** attentively and TAKE NOTES.
2. **Communicate** clearly and actively when asking questions or during discussions.
3. **Be respectful** when asking questions/discussing topics with EVERYONE. This does not mean that you need to agree with all the views/opinions expressed but note that there is a difference between being critical or engaging in a productive conversation and being confrontational or abusive.
4. **Refrain** from excessive talking or use of technology for NONACADEMIC PURPOSES. You are supposed to be in class, so BE IN CLASS.

Use of Generative AI in Assignments and Exams: We all know that Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) can create pieces of writing and other creative outputs. These tools include ChatGPT, Claude, Microsoft Copilot, and so on. These tools are now with us, so it is important to learn how to use them responsibly. You may use AI tools to learn and practice concepts in this course but remember to use a critical eye to what it is telling you. However, you **may not** use AI to write your class assignments or exams for you. This course policy is designed to promote learning and development and help you reach the course learning outcomes. You're here to learn and learning how to communicate ideas through writing is one of the most important parts of being a student.

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT:

Academic Misconduct will not be tolerated. For a more precise definition of academic misconduct and its consequences, refer to the Student Rights and

**Note: all Academic and Administrative policies are available on the same page.