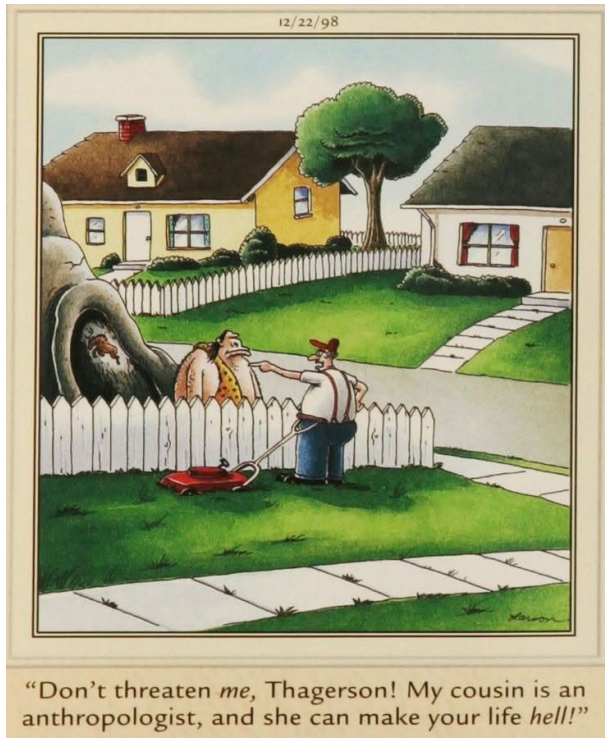


ANTH B101 Becoming Human:
Introduction to Biological Anthropology and Anthropological Archaeology
Fall 2026

Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:10-2:30 PM, Dalton 300



(We will not, in fact, make anyone's life hell!)

Note: Syllabus subject to change! All changes will be announced via e-mail, and we will provide an updated version of the syllabus on Moodle.

Course Objectives

The basic objective of this course is for students to gain an understanding of human biocultural evolution, and the scientific method as applied in biological anthropology and anthropological archaeology. By acquiring familiarity with the major fossil and archaeological finds spanning more than seven million years, students will learn how contemporary anthropologists reconstruct the outlines and patterns of human biological and cultural evolution. Students will also become familiar with debates surrounding the processes of human evolution, primate biology and conservation, the sources of human biological variation and the concept of race, and prehistoric cultural change.

Through written essays and class participation, students will be able to actively engage in critical analyses of past and present academic and popular interpretations of human biocultural evolution. Laboratory sessions are designed to bring hands-on contact with a wide variety of human fossils, archaeological artifacts and comparative material, and thereby make more concrete the intricate variations of the physical record of human history.

The course also serves as a prelude and frequent prerequisite to more advanced courses in biological anthropology and anthropological archaeology.

Professors

Dr. Casey Barrier, he/him (Dalton 306)

cbarrier@brynmawr.edu

Office hours: Tues & Thurs 12:00-1:00 PM; or
email for Zoom appointment

Dr. Maja Šešelj, she/her (Dalton 310)

mseelj@brynmawr.edu

Student drop-in hours: Thu 2:30-4:30; or by
appointment

Teaching Assistants

Carolyn Vaughn

Emma Slaby

Cora Rosin

Course Requirements

READINGS

We will not use a single textbook for this class. Instead, we will draw on multiple sources, including an open-source, freely available online textbook, selected readings from various academic publications and popular science articles, as well as other media resources such as videos and podcasts.

Shook, B., Nelson, K., Aguilera, K., Braff, L. 2023. *Explorations: An Open Invitation to Biological Anthropology*, 2nd Edition www.explorations.americananthro.org (abbreviated X in the course readings schedule)

All readings and other resources will be posted on Moodle, so please check it regularly.

EXAMS

There will be an in-class midterm examination on **October 28**. At the end of the semester, there will be a non-cumulative, **self-scheduled final** examination. Exams can be rescheduled only for extenuating circumstances and with advanced (>24 hours) notice.

ESSAYS

Students will write two short (3-4 double-spaced pages) essays during the semester, one on a topic related to biological anthropology and one on a topic related to archaeology. Instructions will be posted on Moodle and discussed in class. Late papers, except under extenuating circumstances and in consultation with the professors, will not be accepted.

1. Biological anthropology paper: due to Prof. Šešelj between **Tuesday, Sept. 29th and Thursday, October 1st**, via Moodle. A printed copy can be dropped off in class or in her dropbox (Dalton 310).
2. Archaeology paper: due to Prof. Barrier between **Tuesday, Dec 8th and Thursday, Dec. 11th**, via Moodle. A printed copy can be dropped off in class or his dropbox (Dalton 306).

LABS

Eleven lab sessions are required for completing the course. The labs will be held in Dalton 315 on Tuesdays 2:40-4 (Section A) and 4:10 – 5:30 PM (Section B), and Wednesdays 1:10 – 2:30 (Section D) and 2:40 – 4:00 PM (Section C). **There are no labs the first week of class, or the weeks of the midterm and Thanksgiving!** The first lab will meet the week of **September 8th**.

Upon arriving in lab, students should fill in the attendance sheet, keep everything in their bag (including laptops and phones) except for their lab worksheet and a writing utensil, and leave all food and drinks (including water bottles) in the hallway outside the lab. During lab, students will follow the instructions in the lab worksheet to work through the hands-on lab exercises. They will take notes on this worksheet, but will not turn it in for a grade. After lab, **between 4:00 pm Wednesday and 8:00 pm Monday**, students are responsible for taking a short online check- up for that week's lab on Moodle. Students should take these check-ups individually, but they are "open- everything", meaning you can check your textbook, lab handouts, or discuss it with the faculty, TAs, or even classmates. There are unlimited attempts for each check-up! The goal is for you to understand *why* something is the right answer, and not just *what* is the right answer. It's a great way to make sure you're keeping up with the material prior to the midterm and final.

Lab behavior: The lab materials are fragile and often irreplaceable. Students are expected to treat all materials with respect and handle it carefully, always keeping it on the designated padded surfaces. The lab materials may occasionally include real bone (not human). Students must examine this material but touching it is optional. (M.Š. = Prof. Šešelj, C.B. = Prof. Barrier)

<i>Lab #</i>	<i>Lab Date</i>	<i>Lab Topic</i>
1	Sept. 8-9	Skeletal morphology (M.Š.)
2	Sept. 15-16	Forces of evolution (M.Š.)
3	Sept. 22-23	Human variation (M.Š.) Note: this lab is asynchronous
4	Sept. 29-30	Comparative primate anatomy (M.Š.)
5	Oct. 6-7	Bipedalism and early hominins (M.Š.)
	Oct. 13-14	FALL BREAK – NO LAB
6	Oct. 20-21	Australopiths and early <i>Homo</i> (M.Š.)
	Oct. 27-28	MIDTERM WEEK – NO LAB
7	Nov. 3-4	<i>Homo erectus</i> and Middle Pleistocene <i>Homo</i> (M.Š.)
8	Nov. 10-11	Late Pleistocene <i>Homo</i> (M.Š.)
9	Nov. 17-18	Stone tools and symbolic behavior (C.B.)
	Nov. 24-25	THANKSGIVING BREAK – NO LAB
10	Dec. 1-2	Food production and plant domestication (C.B.)
11	Dec. 8-9	Ceramic analysis: form, function, and style (C.B.)

GRADES

Grades will be calculated according to the following percentage scale:

Midterm exam 20%

Bioanthro essay 10%

Final exam 25%

Archaeology essay 10%

Labs 20%

Media literacy assignment 5%

Participation & reading feedback 10%

You must complete ALL of these assignments in order to complete this course!

PARTICIPATION & READING FEEDBACK

Students are expected to regularly *attend* and *participate* in both lab and lecture. However, we strongly encourage everyone to stay home if they're feeling unwell. We have several means of interacting and participating online via Moodle in addition to in class and in lab, in ways that are not time-sensitive. Because labs are mandatory, if you are feeling sick and cannot come to lab, please email Prof. Šešelj (labs 1-8) or Prof. Barrier (labs 9-11) as soon as possible to discuss alternative arrangements. Similarly, if you know in advance that you will need to miss a lab (e.g., for a religious holiday, an athletic meet, etc.), please email us to see if an alternative lab

time can be scheduled for that week.

Reading feedback: we will use Perusall to foster a social reading experience that provides you an additional way to actively participate in this course. Perusall is like an e-reader that allows you to highlight and annotate the readings for yourself, and use text-to-speech should you want to. But it also has a public-facing setting that is visible to the instructors and all other students in the class. You can also tag people, post memes, etc. In your readings each week, please make note on Perusall of anything you may have found confusing or have questions about. You are encouraged to engage with your classmates' comments and questions as you do your own. Maybe you can share some insight on something someone else had found confusing, or you have a different take on an argument? Maybe you found the same reading confusing, or the same quote really resonated with you too? Make a note of it! We will receive feedback on aspects of the readings the students found confusing, so we can make sure that we work through that during our in-class discussion. Participating through Perusall is an important way to engage the readings and gain a richer understanding of the course subject matter, and it allows us to contextualize your participation in this class.

To get full credit for reading feedback, you will need to have done all the readings (this means spending the appropriate time doing the readings, making sure you fully understood the material, and not just a quick skim or scroll through), and provided at least one substantive comment or question (either engaging with the readings directly, or with your peers' comments or questions) per week. Merely having logged on to comment without having read the full texts will not earn full participation points. Additionally, these comments should be generated by you, not AI! We care to understand what *you* think, what resonates with *you*, and what *you* might have questions about, not what an AI would statistically predict to be a “good” comment or question. To make sure the professors have the time to read your questions and comments before class, please post your feedback by 11:59 PM on Sunday for Tuesday readings, and 11:59 PM on Tuesday for Thursday readings. However, you can continue to comment or post questions on the readings at any time throughout the semester for credit.

Media literacy assignment: we live in the age of 24/7 news cycles and social media, and have essentially unlimited access to information at all times. However, today's media and information landscape is ripe with misinformation and disinformation, especially in the age of AI. This credit/no credit assignment will guide you through a series of steps on how to critically approach media stories, recognize sources of bias, discern credible sources from those that may have an agenda, and identify tools being employed to elicit a response in readers/viewers. You will use a science-related story of your choice and follow the steps in the guide to conduct this kind of analysis. Instructions will be posted on Moodle. This assignment will be due **in class between November 17th and 19th.**

Important note: If at any point in the semester you find yourself having difficulties that may affect your ability to participate in this course, please let us know! If you're comfortable doing so, you can reach out to us directly. Alternatively, please notify your Dean or another person of trust, so that they could act as an intermediary as we work together on a solution.

ACCESSIBILITY

If you have a disability, whether apparent or non-apparent, please do not hesitate to contact us to discuss the ways in which we can facilitate your learning and participation in this course. While

students need to arrange academic accommodations through Access Services (see below), we are committed to maintaining an inclusive learning environment beyond what is mandated by law. If during the course of the semester you find any of the course materials to be challenging (e.g., choice of font, font colors, pdfs not accessible to assistive devices, choice of topic), please let us know so we can rectify that and come up with an alternative, if needed.

Bryn Mawr College is committed to providing equal access to students with a documented disability. Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first speak with Access Services. Students can email accessservices@brynmawr.edu to request an appointment to begin this confidential process. If eligible for accommodations as per Access Services, students should share the professors as early in the semester as possible to share their verification form and make appropriate arrangements. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and require advance notice to implement. More information can be obtained at the Access Services website. (<http://www.brynmawr.edu/access-services/>)

Any student who has a disability-related need to record this class must first be found eligible to do so by Access Services and must share this eligibility with us, the instructors. Class members need to be aware that this class may be audio recorded.

More information can be obtained at the respective Tri-Co Access Services websites:

- Bryn Mawr: <http://www.brynmawr.edu/access-services/>
- Haverford: <https://www.haverford.edu/access-and-disability-services/>
- Swarthmore: <https://www.swarthmore.edu/office-academic-success/welcome-to-student-disability-services>

TECHNOLOGY USE

Multiple studies have shown that multitasking on a laptop has adverse effects on student learning, both for the individual and the people sitting nearby who may find their laptop use distracting. If you prefer taking notes on a laptop, you may want to consider sitting towards the back or side of the room to minimize disruption to others who can see your screen (this does not apply to students with different learning needs with assistive devices). Students should keep their phones in their bags and on silent throughout class time. Students with extenuating circumstances who need to urgently answer a call or text are asked to please step outside of the classroom to minimize disruption.

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Student participation is a critical component of anthropology classes. The Department of Anthropology envisions the classroom as safe spaces, where both students and faculty can freely exchange ideas and voice opinions on a range of topics without fear of being disparaged or ridiculed in public or online. Thus, students are asked to refrain from posting on social media the things they hear or observe in class that are explicitly attributed or could be tracked back to a fellow student or faculty member. Such postings would have a chilling effect on classroom discussion, as it may make both students and faculty hesitant to freely express themselves due to concerns about online repercussions. Students taking issue with someone's behavior during class should let the professors know in private so that they can work with the relevant parties to maintain a productive learning environment.

AI use: you should not use generative AI, LLMs, chatbots etc. for written assignments in this

course, unless explicitly stated otherwise. The goals of the work assigned here is for you to develop and further hone your own skills and abilities, and not to outsource them to AI. It may be helpful to think about this as [work vs. the gym](#): is the point of the task that it gets done, regardless of how, or that you yourself do the work? Unsurprisingly, faculty see our class assignments as gym for your brain! We also care more to read what you think and have to say as a unique individual, rather than what is the most probable, anodyne, predictive response. While AI may be helpful in some contexts, your written work in this class will not be assessed relative to some hypothetical, AI-enhanced standard. Furthermore, for the most part, AI is not actually good at things you're being asked to do. Even if one were to ask it to "do research", the sources an AI generates, besides hallucinations, are simply those that are statistically likely to contain something to do with the prompt given, but may not actually claim what AI states they do, nor be an appropriate source material (because AI doesn't actually read them). You will be more effective doing your own research, starting with reputable scientific journals (despite Google now being fully AI-powered and much worse than, say, 10 years ago, [Google Scholar](#) is still the most user-friendly, and best search engine specifically for scientific papers). Please note, if you're used to using apps such as Grammarly, many of them are now AI, too; a lot of note-taking apps are as well. However, there are versions that run entirely locally (on your computer, not the cloud), and don't even need an internet connection (e.g. Snaply, Spokenly), which also come with fewer negative implications regarding privacy. If you have questions or are unsure whether using AI for some course-related task would be ok, please don't hesitate to ask us!

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students are encouraged to discuss course content (both readings and assignments) with their classmates, particularly during labs. However, all written work, check-ups, and exams must be completed individually and represent the individual student's thoughts and ideas. Academic dishonesty (e.g., misrepresenting someone else's work as one's own) can result in 0 for the assignment or for the course, as well as other institutional consequences in keeping with the Bryn Mawr College Honor Code (see <http://sga.blogs.brynmawr.edu/honor-board/honor-code/> and <http://sga.blogs.brynmawr.edu/honor-board/>). Students with questions or concerns about academic integrity should contact the course instructors.

TITLE IX

Bryn Mawr/Haverford College is committed to fostering a safe and inclusive living and learning environment where all can feel secure and free from harassment. All forms of sex discrimination, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, domestic violence, and dating violence, are violations of Bryn Mawr/Haverford's policies, whether they occur on or off campus. Bryn Mawr/Haverford faculty are committed to helping to create a safe learning environment for all students and for the College community as a whole. If you have experienced any form of gender or sex-based discrimination, harassment, or violence, know that help and support are available. Staff members are trained to support students in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, and more.

The College strongly encourages all students to report any incidents of sex discrimination and/or sex-based harassment. Please be aware that all Bryn Mawr/Haverford employees (other than those designated as confidential resources such as counselors, clergy, and healthcare providers) are required to report information about such discrimination and harassment to the Bi-College Title IX Coordinator.

Information about the College's Sex Discrimination and Sex-Based Harassment Policy, reporting options, and a list of campus and local resources can be found on the College's website:

BMC: https://www.brynmawr.edu/sites/default/files/migrated-files/Bryn-Mawr-College-Sexual-Misconduct-Policy_2020-2021.pdf

HC: https://www.haverford.edu/sites/default/files/Office/Haverford-College-Sex-Discrimination-and-Sex-Based-Harassment-Policy_Aug-2024.pdf

Bryn Mawr College current infectious disease policy

Bryn Mawr College continues to monitor all infectious illnesses, including, but not limited to, COVID-19, Flu, and RSV. The College continues to follow guidance from the Montgomery County Health Department.

For more information, including on up-to-date information on measles, go to <https://www.brynmawr.edu/inside/offices-services/health-wellness-center/resources/health-resources>

Important note: if you or someone you know find yourself in need of a face mask or a rapid covid/flu test, but have a hard time accessing them, please contact Prof. Šešelj to get some!

Course schedule

Note: should a professor come down with illness, and their health permitting, that day's lecture will be moved to Zoom. You will be notified via email of this shift as early as possible. Both Prof. Barrier's and Prof. Šešelj's Zoom links are posted on Moodle. Use the initials next to the meeting topic below (M.Š. = Prof. Šešelj, C.B. = Prof. Barrier) to determine which Zoom meeting you should join, if needed.

Students should complete the assigned readings before coming to the specified class meeting.

<i>Week</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Meeting topic</i>	<i>Readings</i>
1	Tue., Sep. 1	Introduction to the four fields of anthropology The concept of culture, scientific method (M.Š. & C.B.)	X1
1	Thu., Sep. 3	History of evolutionary theory, Darwin, natural selection (M.Š.)	X2; Malik et al. (2017)
2	Tue., Sep. 8	Genetic basis of evolutionary change, forces of evolution (M.Š.)	X3: pg. 18-40, X4:1-15, Thayer & Non (2015)
2	Thu., Sep. 10	Classification, speciation (M.Š.)	X4:18-31; Baum (2008)
3	Tue., Sep. 15	Modern human variation and adaptation (M.Š.)	X14; Hershberger (2020)
3	Thu., Sep. 17	Anthropology and scientific racism (M.Š.) (asynchronous!)	X13; Mitchell (2018)
4	Tue., Sep. 22	The living primates (M.Š.)	X5
4	Thu., Sep. 24	Primate behavior (M.Š.)	X6; Fuentes (2025)
5	Tue., Sept 29	Archaeological and paleoanthropological methods (C.B.) Biological anthropology essay due Sep 29-Oct 1	X7
5	Thu., Oct. 1	The earliest hominins: bipedal locomotion (M.Š.)	X9: 1-14
6	Tue., Oct. 6	The australopiths (M.Š.)	X9: 14-47
6	Thu., Oct. 8	Early <i>Homo</i> : Fossils, sites, phylogeny (M. Š.)	X10:1-9
7	Oct. 13-15	Fall Break: No class	

<i>Week</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Meeting topic</i>	<i>Readings</i>
8	Tue., Oct. 20	Stone tool technology, behavioral adaptation and site interpretation (C.B.)	Toth & Schick (2021), Krinking (2025)
8	Thu., Oct. 22	<i>Homo erectus/ergaster</i> (M.Š.)	X10: 9-25
9	Tue., Oct. 27	In-class midterm (covers Sept. 1 – Oct. 20)	
9	Thu., Oct. 29	Middle Pleistocene <i>Homo</i> & <i>H. naledi</i> (M.Š.)	X11:1-6, 17-19; Pettit & Wood (2024)
10	Tue., Nov. 3	Neandertals (M.Š.)	X11: 6-11; Wragg Sykes (2023)
10	Thu., Nov. 5	Origins of anatomically modern humans (M.Š.)	X12, X11: 15-16, 19-26; Ongaro (2024)
11	Tue., Nov. 10	Behaviorally modern humans (C.B.)	Wurz (2012)
11	Thu., Nov. 12	Peopling of the Americas (C.B.)	Pauketat & Sassaman (2020); TallBear (2015); Curry (2022)
12	Tue., Nov. 17	Early Holocene hunter gatherers, domestication, and the origins of food production (C.B.) Media literacy assignment due Nov 17-19	Lavenda & Schultz (2015); Diamond 2012
12	Thu., Nov. 19	Complex hunter-gatherers, first farming societies, and what we mean by “complexity”	Watkins (2021)
13	Tue., Nov. 24	The first cities and states of Mesopotamia (C.B.)	Matthews (2021)
13	Thu., Nov. 26	Thanksgiving break: No class	
14	Tue., Dec. 1	Complexity and State Society in Asia and Africa (C.B.)	Price & Feinman (2013a)
14	Thu., Dec. 3	Complexity and State Society in Meso- and South America (C.B.)	Price & Feinman (2013b)
15	Tue., Dec. 8	Villages, towns, and incipient urbanism in North America (C.B.) Archaeology essay due Dec 8-10	Milner et al. (2021)
15	Thu., Dec. 10	Biocultural evolution & the Great Acceleration (C.B.)	Globaia 2026
16	Dec. 13-18	Self-scheduled final exam (covers Oct. 22-Dec. 10)	