ANTH1051

Human Evolution and Diversity

Session 1, In person-scheduled-weekday, North Ryde 2025

School of Communication, Society and Culture

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General Information

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Credit points
10

Prerequisites

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description
This unit explores the evolution of our species, what makes humans distinct, and how we have developed the biological, cultural and technological diversity we now see around us. The unit examines new research, highlighting the most recent discoveries and theoretical breakthroughs, encouraging students to learn more about the major debates, key discoveries, and important theories in the study of human evolution. Specifically, the unit provides students with a background in evolutionary theory, genetics, anthropology, paleoarchaeology, and comparative primatology in order to address a number of topics: the development of the human brain; bipedalism; language; families; social life; sexuality; reproduction; hunting; diet; art; stone tools and technology; language; domesticated plants and animals; cities; and the first civilisations. The unit also demonstrates how an evolutionary perspective offers new insights into modern human diversity, including both cultural and biological differences among us. The unit does not require a background in the biological or evolutionary sciences. It provides an excellent foundation for understanding and evaluating important contemporary issues.

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

ULO1: Explain key anthropological concepts and theories in the study of human evolution, including be familiar with the most important debates and new developments in the field.

ULO2: Explain how paleoanthropologists conduct research and draw conclusions about extinct species and ways of life from material evidence.

ULO3: Evaluate and employ evolution-based explanations for contemporary features of human life, anatomy, and behavior.

ULO4: Employ theoretical concepts, evidence, and analysis by specifically exercising these abilities on the materials covered in this unit.

ULO5: Discuss and examine material related to human evolution (such as facsimile remains, site surveys, and material culture).

ULO6: Analyse and express judgement about significant debates in the study of human evolution.

General Assessment Information

Unless a Special Consideration request has been submitted and approved, a 5% penalty (of the total possible mark) will be applied each day a written assessment is not submitted, up until the 7th day (including weekends). After the 7th day, a mark of '0' (zero) will be awarded even if the assessment is submitted. Submission time for all non-timed written assessments (incl essays, reports, posters, portfolios, journals, recordings, etc.) is set at 11.55 pm.

A 1-hour grace period is provided to students who experience a technical issue. Late submission of time sensitive tasks (such as tests/exams/quizzes, performance assessments/presentations, scheduled practical assessments/labs, etc.) will only be addressed by the unit convenor in a Special consideration application. Special Consideration outcome may result in a new question or topic.

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Hurdle	Due	Groupwork/Individual	Short Extension	AI Approach
Literature review	20%	No	11/04/2025		No	

Name	Weighting	Hurdle	Due	Groupwork/Individual	Short Extension	AI Approach
Final online exam	25%	No	6-8 June 2025		No	
Argument outline	25%	No	30/05/2025		No	
In-tutorial discussion questions	10%	No	Weekly		No	
Weekly online quizzes	20%	No	Weekly, available until just before next lecture, weekly		No	

Literature review

Assessment Type [1]: Literature review
Indicative Time on Task [2]: 10 hours
Due: **11/04/2025**
Weighting: **20%**
Groupwork/Individual:
Short extension [3]: No
AI Approach:

The literature review is a library-based assignment that can be conducted online, especially using the Macquarie University Library's extensive database and journal collection. Students find a recent article in a scientific journal, referred to as the 'target article' (peer reviewed and published in the last five years). They find five additional sources linked to this article, either because they are cited in the target article's References or because they cite the target article (or in the References of one of the articles CITING the target article). Students write short (<200 word descriptions of each articles).

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Explain key anthropological concepts and theories in the study of human evolution, including be familiar with the most important debates and new developments in the field.
- Explain how paleoanthropologists conduct research and draw conclusions about extinct species and ways of life from material evidence.
- Employ theoretical concepts, evidence, and analysis by specifically exercising these abilities on the materials covered in this unit.

- Analyse and express judgement about significant debates in the study of human evolution.

Final online exam

Assessment Type [1]: Quiz/Test
Indicative Time on Task [2]: 2 hours
Due: **6-8 June 2025**
Weighting: **25%**
Groupwork/Individual:
Short extension [3]: No
AI Approach:

The final exam is cumulative and multiple choice, conducted online during the exam period.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Explain key anthropological concepts and theories in the study of human evolution, including be familiar with the most important debates and new developments in the field.
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Argument outline

Assessment Type [1]: Essay
Indicative Time on Task [2]: 12 hours
Due: **30/05/2025**
Weighting: **25%**
Groupwork/Individual:
Short extension [3]: No
AI Approach:

The argument outline consists of an introduction (approximately one page), an outline of evidence and how the argument would be structured (citing the sources), conclusion which discusses the implications, reservations and importance of the argument and a 'references cited' list (only articles cited in the outline). The whole document should be less than four pages.

On successful completion you will be able to:

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- Explain how paleoanthropologists conduct research and draw conclusions about extinct species and ways of life from material evidence.
- Evaluate and employ evolution-based explanations for contemporary features of human life, anatomy, and behavior.
- Employ theoretical concepts, evidence, and analysis by specifically exercising these abilities on the materials covered in this unit.
- Analyse and express judgement about significant debates in the study of human evolution.

In-tutorial discussion questions

Assessment Type [1]: Participatory task
Indicative Time on Task [2]: 6 hours
Due: **Weekly**
Weighting: **10%**
Groupwork/Individual:
Short extension [3]: No
AI Approach:

Each week, the tutorial (online and on campus) sets the students a series of tasks, including a participatory task depending upon the material for that week.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Discuss and examine material related to human evolution (such as facsimile remains, site surveys, and material culture).
- Analyse and express judgement about significant debates in the study of human evolution.

Weekly online quizzes

Assessment Type [1]: Quiz/Test
Indicative Time on Task [2]: 6 hours
Due: **Weekly, available until just before next lecture, weekly**
Weighting: **20%**

Groupwork/Individual:
Short extension [3]: No
AI Approach:

Starting after the lecture in Week 2, students will be expected to take a weekly quiz online based on the readings, lecture and tutorial activity. The quiz will close prior to the lecture in the following week.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Explain key anthropological concepts and theories in the study of human evolution, including be familiar with the most important debates and new developments in the field.
- Explain how paleoanthropologists conduct research and draw conclusions about extinct species and ways of life from material evidence.
- Evaluate and employ evolution-based explanations for contemporary features of human life, anatomy, and behavior.
- Employ theoretical concepts, evidence, and analysis by specifically exercising these abilities on the materials covered in this unit.

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[1] If you need help with your assignment, please contact:

- the academic teaching staff in your unit for guidance in understanding or completing this type of assessment
- Academic Success for academic skills support.

[2] Indicative time-on-task is an estimate of the time required for completion of the assessment task and is subject to individual variation.

[3] An automatic short extension is available for some assessments. Apply through the Service Connect Portal.

Delivery and Resources

Anth1051 is primarily a lecture and tutorial class, with hands-on examination of facsimile human remains and other lab-based activities conducted in tutorials.

Technology used and required:

Students will need to have access to the iLearn section, as handouts, FAQs, video links, and a host of other resources will be available through iLearn. The online discussion sections for Anth 1051 historically have been very active as students help each other to understand key concepts. The unit convenor makes extensive use of online slides, videos, Prezis, and other resources.

Readings

All readings for the unit will be available through the iLearn space for the units. Students will not be able to complete the unit without these materials. Students will also find the weekly review sheets for key concepts and additional information about assessment tasks in each weekly section of iLearn.

Lecture times

Please refer to the university timetable for lecture and tutorial times and locations. Students are strongly encouraged to attend lectures, but if scheduling or unforeseen circumstances are an issue, all lectures are taped through Echo 360, and slide shows (including video links and other materials), available through iLearn. A copy of old slides is provided on iLearn for study purposes with students encouraged to take notes during the lecture either in person or from the recording.

Teaching and Learning Strategy

The course as a whole is designed to convey the excitement, theoretical innovation, and new discoveries emerging in the study of human evolution. A clearer understanding of evolutionary processes allows students to appreciate the role of evolution in shaping humans and other organisms and to better evaluate contemporary arguments that make use of evolutionary theory or research. By the end of the unit, students should have a greater appreciation of the diversity of methods used to study human evolution, some of the most important debates within the field, and the distinctiveness of human beings among animals.

The course provides an excellent foundation for further, more specialized study in anthropology at the 200-level, but it also provides a robust understanding of human evolution that might contribute to students' continued study of such fields as health, psychology, politics, Aboriginal studies, and a host of other specialties. Although each week focuses roughly on a different time period in human evolution, the issues brought up in each will be extended to contemporary human life.

For example, although the discussion of Technology in Week Eight focuses on the emergence of complex stone tools, especially the contrast between Neandertal material culture and the technology of comparable archaic Homo sapiens, we will also discussing how technological innovation affects the evolutionary development of humans up until the present. By examining how we came to be as a species, our ancestors and nearest relatives, we come to a deeper understanding of human nature itself, including the variation that exists within our species—both biological and cultural.

Evolutionary theory is one of the most powerful explanatory mechanisms for understanding all life, but it is also prone to being abused; the thorough background provided in this unit may lead students to be more sceptical around certain types of evolutionary arguments without repudiating evolutionary theory itself. In addition, this unit on evolution and diversity provides a foundation for thinking about the relationship of culture to biology, of nature to nurture, and of psychology to social life.

The questions posed by the origins of humanity are too big and difficult to solve with only half the evidence at our disposal, so we will become better practiced at understanding human holistically, one of the most important characteristics of anthropology. Students will do best if they realise

that, to some degree, many of the key issues in the evolutionary history of our species and in the nature of our species' diversity are still subject to debate, although anthropologists and other scientists may agree on the broader outlines.

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from Policy Central (https://policies.mq.edu.au). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

- Academic Appeals Policy
- Academic Integrity Policy
- Academic Progression Policy
- Assessment Policy
- Fitness to Practice Procedure
- Assessment Procedure
- Complaints Resolution Procedure for Students and Members of the Public
- Special Consideration Policy

Students seeking more policy resources can visit Student Policies (https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/policies). It is your one-stop-shop for the key policies you need to know about throughout your undergraduate student journey.

To find other policies relating to Teaching and Learning, visit Policy Central (https://policies.mq.edu.au) and use the search tool.

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: https://students.mq.edu.au/admin/other-resources/student-conduct

Results

Results published on platform other than eStudent, (eg. iLearn, Coursera etc.) or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in eStudent. For more information visit connect.mq.edu.au or if you are a Global MBA student contact globalmba.support@mq.edu.au

Academic Integrity

At Macquarie, we believe academic integrity – honesty, respect, trust, responsibility, fairness and courage – is at the core of learning, teaching and research. We recognise that meeting the expectations required to complete your assessments can be challenging. So, we offer you a range of resources and services to help you reach your potential, including free online writing and maths support, academic skills development and wellbeing consultations.

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit http://students.mq.edu.au/support/

Academic Success

Academic Success provides resources to develop your English language proficiency, academic writing, and communication skills.

- Workshops
- Chat with a WriteWISE peer writing leader
- Access StudyWISE
- Upload an assignment to Studiosity
- Complete the Academic Integrity Module

The Library provides online and face to face support to help you find and use relevant information resources.

- Subject and Research Guides
- Ask a Librarian

Student Services and Support

Macquarie University offers a range of Student Support Services including:

- IT Support
- Accessibility and disability support with study
- Mental health support
- Safety support to respond to bullying, harassment, sexual harassment and sexual assault
- Social support including information about finances, tenancy and legal issues
- Student Advocacy provides independent advice on MQ policies, procedures, and processes

Student Enquiries

Got a question? Ask us via the Service Connect Portal, or contact Service Connect.

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the Acceptable Use of IT Resources Policy. The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

Unit information based on version 2025.01R of the Handbook