



SSCI3040

Bodies, Brains, Technology: Humans Evolving

Session 2, In person-scheduled-weekday, North Ryde 2026

School of Communication, Society and Culture

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Disclaimer

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Greg Downey

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Credit points

10

Prerequisites

130cp at 1000 level or above

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

Human evolution has produced a species so numerous and technologically sophisticated that our activities influence the very future of Earth, including our own species' survival or destruction. How has human evolution generated such a potential fate? This unit examines how developments like agriculture, urbanisation, and advanced technology affect us today and into the future. Students will learn about the evolutionary origin of human distinctiveness, including traits crucial in differentiating our ancestors' ways of life from other apes, such as bipedalism, tool use, cooperative social life, and comprehension of our own mortality. Drawing from a range of disciplines, the unit highlights key debates, breakthrough discoveries, and an up-to-date account of how our species evolved. The unit does not require a background in the biological or evolutionary sciences; it specifically addresses questions about the significance of our origins and evolutionary processes on contemporary topics, including health, diversity, environmentalism, and the ethical development of technology.

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: Reflect on the significance of human evolution in shaping central features of human lives today, using ethnographic examples and evolutionary theory.

ULO2: Apply anthropological theories of human evolution to the analysis of larger social, cultural and political structures.

ULO3: Outline and describe important periods and transformations in the history of human evolution and how they shaped features of modern human anatomy, cognition, and social abilities.

ULO4: Analyse and articulate how evolutionary explanations are integrated into contemporary discussions of major social issues.

ULO5: Engage in a simulation of evolutionary change to understand how evolutionary principles might be used to forecast the impact of technological, environmental, or policy change.

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 written assessments is set at 11.55pm. A 1-hour grace period is provided to students who experience a technical issue. This late penalty will apply to non-time sensitive assessment (incl. essays, reports, posters, portfolios, journals, recordings etc). Late submission of time sensitive tasks (such as tests/exams, 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
<u>Simulation and reflection</u>	40%	No	08/11/2026	Individual	No	Open
<u>Media presentation</u>	30%	No	11/09/2026	Individual	Yes	Observed
<u>Exam and oral defense</u>	30%	No	30/10/2026	Individual	Yes	Observed

Simulation and reflection

Assessment Type ¹: Practice-based task

Indicative Time on Task ²: 30 hours

Due: **08/11/2026**

Weighting: **40%**

Groupwork/Individual: Individual

Short extension ³: No

AI Approach: Open

Simulation and reflection

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Reflect on the significance of human evolution in shaping central features of human lives today, using ethnographic examples and evolutionary theory.
- Apply anthropological theories of human evolution to the analysis of larger social, cultural and political structures.
- Analyse and articulate how evolutionary explanations are integrated into contemporary discussions of major social issues.
- Engage in a simulation of evolutionary change to understand how evolutionary principles might be used to forecast the impact of technological, environmental, or policy change.

Media presentation

Assessment Type ¹: Presentation task

Indicative Time on Task ²: 30 hours

Due: **11/09/2026**

Weighting: **30%**

Groupwork/Individual: Individual

Short extension ³: Yes

AI Approach: Observed

Media presentation

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Reflect on the significance of human evolution in shaping central features of human lives today, using ethnographic examples and evolutionary theory.
- Outline and describe important periods and transformations in the history of human evolution and how they shaped features of modern human anatomy, cognition, and social abilities.

Exam and oral defense

Assessment Type ¹: Examination

Indicative Time on Task ²: 20 hours

Due: **30/10/2026**

Weighting: **30%**

Groupwork/Individual: Individual

Short extension ³: Yes

AI Approach: Observed

Exam and oral defense

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Reflect on the significance of human evolution in shaping central features of human lives today, using ethnographic examples and evolutionary theory.
 - Apply anthropological theories of human evolution to the analysis of larger social, cultural and political structures.
 - Outline and describe important periods and transformations in the history of human evolution and how they shaped features of modern human anatomy, cognition, and social abilities.
 - Analyse and articulate how evolutionary explanations are integrated into contemporary discussions of major social issues.
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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

Please see the iLearn site for the unit for all information about delivery, resources, policies and other questions.

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](https://policies.mq.edu.au) (<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/su) (<https://students.mq.edu.au/su>)

[upport/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.

- [Ask a Study Coach](#)
- [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 <https://students.mq.edu.au/support/technology/service-desk>.

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.

Changes from Previous Offering

This unit is being offered for the first time in 2026.

Unit information based on version 2026.02 of the [Handbook](#)