

Ph.D. in Evolutionary Psychology
Department of Psychology, Florida Atlantic University

[Unanimously approved by the Graduate Curriculum Committee, Department of Psychology, October 2, 2002; subsequently submitted to and unanimously approved by the Faculty of the Department of Psychology, November 13, 2002]

I. Overview of Evolutionary Psychology

Evolutionary psychology attempts to make sense of current human thoughts, feelings, and behaviors by careful consideration of human evolutionary history. Over our evolutionary history, humans have faced many problems that needed to be solved to survive and reproduce. Our ancestors are those humans whose psychology motivated them to solve the problems of survival and reproduction better than others. Modern human psychology includes the psychological mechanisms (or information processing devices) that made our ancestors better at survival and reproduction. Evolutionary psychologists practice normal paradigm science, including theory development, hypothesis derivation, and hypothesis testing. Evolutionary psychologists use statistical techniques and research methods accepted and practiced by all research psychologists. Research methodologies used by evolutionary psychologists include experimental studies, observational studies, correlational studies, archival research, and simulation studies. Research conducted by evolutionary psychologists therefore is normal paradigm psychological science that is explicitly informed by an evolutionary perspective.

II. Core Faculty

Todd K. Shackelford, Professor of Psychology and Chair of Evolutionary Psychology Ph.D. Program
David F. Bjorklund, Professor of Psychology
Robin R. Vallacher, Professor of Psychology

III. Area Curriculum

This program builds on the requirements for all doctoral students in psychology. Thus, for example, students specializing in Evolutionary Psychology will be required to take the same courses in statistics and experimental design that are required of all doctoral students. Students in Evolutionary Psychology will be required to take at least one course in each of the four other psychology concentration areas (Cognitive, Developmental, Neuroscience, Social/Personality; see “D” below).

A. Core Courses. Students will be required to take two (2) core courses in Evolutionary Psychology, totaling six (6) credit hours. These are:

CBH 6303: Seminar in Evolutionary Psychology: A broad overview of the field of evolutionary psychology, including coverage of evolutionary psychological theory and research in developmental psychology, social psychology, personality psychology, and cognitive psychology. Three (3) credit hours.

DEP 6610: Evolutionary Developmental Psychology: This seminar acquaints students with the emerging field of evolutionary developmental psychology. Introduction of key concepts, issues, and lines of research. Students are expected to take an active role in discussing and developing the topic under consideration. Three (3) credit hours.

B. Special Topics Courses. Students will be required to take at least three (3) Special Topics in Evolutionary Psychology courses, totaling nine (9) credit hours. Examples of such courses are:

PSY 6840: Evolution of Human Sexuality: Seminar is designed to introduce students to classic and contemporary theory and research on the evolution of human sexuality and behavior. Three (3) credit hours.

Special Topics in Evolutionary Psychology: Evolutionary Social Psychology: An overview of historical and current work that addresses questions about social relationships, interactions, and processes from an evolutionary psychological perspective. Three (3) credit hours.

Special Topics in Evolutionary Psychology: Aggression and Violent Behavior. An overview of historical and current work that addresses questions about aggression and violent from an evolutionary psychological perspective. Three (3) credit hours.

Special Topics in Evolutionary Psychology: Close Relationships. An overview of historical and current work that addresses the development, maintenance, and dissolution of close relationships, including romantic relationships, friendships, and family relationships, from an evolutionary psychological perspective. Three (3) credit hours.

Special Topics in Evolutionary Psychology: Parental Investment. An examination of parental investment theory, the evolution of human parenting, and evolutionarily-influenced patterns of child rearing in contemporary humans. Three (3) credit hours.

C. Minor Concentration. Students are encouraged to identify a minor area of concentration from among the other areas in psychology (Cognitive, Developmental, Neuroscience, Social/Personality).

D. Courses in Other, Non-Minor Psychology Areas. Students are required to take at least one course in each of the four other psychology concentration areas (Cognitive, Developmental, Neuroscience, Social/Personality).

E. Courses Outside Psychology. Students are encouraged to take courses offered in departments other than Psychology. With prior approval of the Chair of the Evolutionary Psychology program, students may count up to three (3) courses toward their degree, totaling up to ten (10) credit hours. Examples of such courses may include the following (course descriptions from FAU Graduate Catalogue, 2002-2003):

Biological Sciences

PCB 6335: Biogeography. Introduction to historical and modern approaches to the analysis and explanation of the origins and distribution of organisms to the historical, geological, and ecological processes that have caused them. Three (3) credit hours.

BCS 5931: Special Topics in Biological Sciences: For example, evolution, ecology, evolutionary biology, comparative biology, sperm competition, animal behavior. Three (3) credit hours.

Biomedical Sciences

PCB 6804: Reproductive Endocrinology. Study of the anatomy, histology, biochemistry, and physiology and the human reproductive system. Three (3) credit hours.

Chemistry

BCH 5415: Biochemistry of the Gene. A detailed study of selected topics in molecular biology, including DNA replication, gene regulation, transcription and RNA processing, and techniques of genetic engineering. Three (3) credit hours.

Anthropology

ANG 6115: Special Topics in Anthropology. Human evolution, human biological anthropology, human cultural evolution. Three (3) credit hours.

ANG 6587: Seminar in Biological Anthropology I. Biology and environment in human existence: Theoretical considerations. Four (4) credit hours.

ANG 6589: Seminar in Biological Anthropology II. Current controversies and major issues in human and nonhuman primate evolution. Four (4) credit hours.