“More than 95% of art history falls before 2000 years ago, less than 5% of the pages in art history textbooks are devoted to the subject” (White 2003)

Course Content: This course addresses the question: Why do humans make art? The earliest art dates to tens of thousands of years ago, which means that art behavior emerged in a hunting-and-gathering context. Hunter-gatherer life is dangerous, difficult, and rigorous: why would our ancestors have “wasted” their time and energy on what appear to be non-utilitarian objects and activities? We will explore this question by examining some of the most influential hypotheses regarding the role that art behavior played in early human societies. To evaluate these hypotheses, we will examine the archaeological and ethnographic records to understand: (1) the basic features of hunter-gatherer life; (2) the range of art forms and media that hunter-gatherer peoples employ; (3) the subject matter of hunter-gatherer art; and (4) the occasions and settings in which art behavior occurs in hunter-gatherer societies. By the end of the course, students should have a better understanding of what art is and the role that it played in ancestral human groups, which they can then use to better understand the role that art plays in modern environments. Course reading consists of scientific articles on prehistoric artworks, theories of art behavior, human evolution, and hunter-gatherer life.

Course Goals: By the end of the term, students can expect to be familiar with

1) key features of hunter-gatherer life
2) the role that information exchange has played in our species’ evolution
3) major hypotheses regarding the kinds of information art behavior is used to transmit
4) the range of art forms and media that hunter-gatherer peoples use
5) recurrent patterns in the subject matter of hunter-gatherer art
6) occasions and settings in which art behavior occurs in hunter-gatherer societies

Office Hours: I regularly check my email twice a day, once in the morning and again in the early evening. (I often check it at other times as well, but these are unpredictable.) This means that if you email me after 7:00 PM, I probably won’t see it until the next morning, and if you email me in the late morning or early afternoon, I probably won’t see it until that evening. I am also available for Skype or face-to-face meetings by appointment.

Technical Difficulties: With online courses, technical failures inevitably occur. As I cannot monitor the course site continually, I depend on you to notify me of any tech issues as soon as they come to your attention. Don’t panic if I don’t respond to your email immediately (see Office Hours). When tech failures occur, deadlines will be extended as appropriate.

Students With Disabilities: Appropriate accommodations will be provided for students with documented disabilities. If you anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please contact me asap and send me a notification letter from Disability Services outlining your accommodations.
Course Requirements

Proctoring: The UO College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) now requires that exams (but not quizzes) in online courses be proctored. You are responsible for making proctoring arrangements, and should make them as soon as possible. Failure to do so will make it impossible for you to take the exams and pass the course. If you are in Eugene, you can arrange to take the exams in one of the Social Sciences Instructional Labs (SSIL - http://oe.uoregon.edu/security-measures/). Note that space is limited in the labs, as are the hours of operation, so you should schedule your appointment well in advance (http://ssil.uoregon.edu/). If you do not live in Eugene or are unable to come to campus, follow the instructions on the CAS website to arrange for proctoring in your location (http://oe.uoregon.edu/remote-proctor-coordination/). This information is also available on the course Canvas site, in the Getting Started module.

Readings: The course is organized on Canvas in weekly modules. To access readings and all other class materials, go to the appropriate week’s module. The readings are scientific articles and chapters from edited volumes and ethnographies that present theories and findings relevant to understanding the emergence and function(s) of art behavior. Much of what you read will be primary scientific research presented by those who conduct it, as opposed to a broad overview that might be found in a textbook. Because lectures are designed to explicate and review key points of the assigned texts, you are expected to do the reading before you listen to the lectures.

Discussion Board Posts: Most weeks, a discussion prompt will be posted based on the lecture material and required reading. These weekly discussions provide an opportunity for you to demonstrate that you have completed and understood the readings, and critically engaged with the material. The discussion board also offers a forum for you to talk with your classmates about course-related material, and can even serve as an “online study group” when preparing for tests. In general, I encourage you to use the discussion board as a space to ask questions and receive feedback from other students. I will be available to address questions as needed, but this will be a student-facilitated discussion. Written assignments are worth approximately 25% of your grade. Before making your first post, please read the Netiquette guidelines posted in the Getting Started module.

Make Copies of Your Work! Given that this is an online course, I recommend that you store all of your work on a personal external memory drive. The recommended workflow is to create all your work (including discussion board posts) on a word processing document and then cut and paste into the forum on Canvas. Your instructor is not responsible for lost or missing coursework. Please be safe and back up your work!

Grading:

1. Your course grade will be based on your performance on the Quizzes (25%), Writing Assignments (25%), Midterm Exam (25%), and Final Exam (25%). Grading is done on a straight percentage scale so theoretically there is no reason that everyone cannot get As.
2. Quizzes are timed, multiple-choice, 15-question tests taken online through Canvas. Each quiz covers the reading assignments and lectures for that week, and is designed to test your understanding of key concepts, findings, hypotheses, regions, and periods presented
that week. **Quizzes are due every Friday by 11:59 p.m.**, with the exception of Week 1, when the quiz is due by 11:59 p.m. on Saturday. There is no quiz in Week 5 or Week 10.

3. Writing assignments are short-answer (1-2 paragraphs) assignments designed to test your ability to identify and analyze key aspects of art behavior, and apply core concepts presented in the course.

4. Exams are the same as quizzes except they are comprehensive, longer, and must be proctored.

5. No late work or make-ups allowed without Approved Proof of Legitimate Reason for missing the due date (for exceptions, see **Technical Difficulties**).

**Grading Rubric:** Grading is done on a straight percentage scale.

- A+ = 97-100%
- A = 93-96.9%
- A- = 90-92.9%
- B+ = 87-89.9%
- B = 83-86.9%
- B- = 80-82.9%
- C+ = 77-79.9%
- C = 73-76.9%
- C- = 70-72.9%
- D+ = 67-69.9%
- D = 63-66.9%
- D- = 60-62.9%
- F = < 59.9%

**Expected levels of performance:**

**A+:** Quality of student's performance significantly exceeds all requirements and expectations required for an A grade. Very few, if any, students receive this grade in a given course.

**A:** Quality of performance is outstanding relative to that required to meet course requirements; demonstrates mastery of course content at the highest level.

**B:** Quality of performance is significantly above that required to meet course requirements; demonstrates mastery of course content at a high level.

**C:** Quality of performance meets the course requirements in every respect; demonstrates adequate understanding of course content.

**D:** Quality of performance is at the minimal level necessary to pass the course, but does not fully meet the course requirements; demonstrates a marginal understanding of course content.

**F:** Quality of performance in the course is unacceptable and does not meet the course requirements; demonstrates an inadequate understanding of course content.

**Academic Honesty:** academic misconduct is a violation of the UO Student Conduct Code, which prohibits the “act of cheating, fabrication, and plagiarism. Examples: looking at another person’s exam, making up lab results, and failing to cite sources in a paper.” Listening to lectures, watching films, and studying with other students in the class is allowed and encouraged, but all tests and assignments must be done independently: all work submitted for this course must be your own and produced exclusively for this class. Any student who engages in academic dishonesty risks failing the class.
SCHEDULE OF READINGS

WEEK 1 Art Behavior & Evolution
Morris 2013 “Non-human art,” “Child art”
White 2003 “Introduction,” “Art, Culture, and the Issue of Context”
Evans and Zarate 2005 Introducing Evolutionary Psychology (pp. 3-60)

WEEK 2 Aesthetic Responses
Barrett et al. 2007 “The human entry into the cognitive niche”
Eibl-Eibesfeldt 1988 “The biological foundation of aesthetics” (pp. 29-49 only!)
Orians & Heerwagen 1992 “Evolved responses to landscapes”
Singh & Luis 1995 “Ethnic and gender consensus for the effect of waist-to-hip ratio on judgment of women’s attractiveness”

WEEK 3 Signaling & Sensory Exploitation
Verpooten & Nelissen 2010 “Sensory exploitation and cultural transmission: The late emergence of iconic representations in human evolution”
Dissanayake 1995 “Chimera, spandrel, or adaptation”

WEEK 4 Beginnings Part I
Joordens et al. 2015 “Homo erectus at Trinil on Java used shells for tool production and engraving” (pp. 228-230)
Henshilwood et al. 2002 “Emergence of modern human behavior: Middle Stone Age engravings from South Africa”
Henshilwood et al. 2004 “Middle Stone Age shell beads from South Africa”
Bouzouggar et al. 2007 “82,000-year-old shell beads from North Africa”
White 2003 “Chapter 4: Prehistoric representation in Western Europe”
Balme & Morse 2006 “Shell beads and social behavior in Pleistocene Australia”

Aubert et al. 2014 “Pleistocene cave art from Sulawesi, Indonesia” (pp. 223-226 only)

WEEK 5 Beginnings Part II

White 2005 “Chapter 5: Prehistoric representation in Central and Eastern Europe and Siberia”

Conard 2009 “A female figurine from the basal Aurignacian in Hohle Fels cave in southwestern Germany”

MIDTERM EXAM

WEEK 6 Ethnographic Context

Lee 1984 “Hxaro exchange,” “Coping with life: religion, world view, and healing” (pp. 103-115)

Chagnon 1997 “Political Alliances, Trading, and Feasting”

Rasmussen 1929 “Songs and dances, games and pastimes” (pp. 227-244)

Bogoras 1904-1909 “Chukchee tattooing and personal adornment” (pp. 254-260)

Morphy 1989 “On representing ancestral beings”

Mountford & Tonkinson 1969 “Carved and engraved human figures from North Western Australia”

WEEK 7 Signaling: Cooperation

Jochim 1983 “Palaeolithic cave art in ecological perspective”

Weinstein et al. 2015 “Group music performance causes elevated pain thresholds and social bonding in small and large groups of singers”

Mithen 1990 “Through a hunter’s eyes . . . and into his mind?”

Wachtel 1999 “The first picture show: the cinematic aspects of cave art”

WEEK 8 Signaling: Territory & Warfare

Eibl-Eibesfeldt 1988 “The biological foundation of aesthetics” (pp. 55-59 only!)

Dittrich et al. 1996 “Perception of emotion from point-light displays represented in dance”
Hagen & Bryant 2003 “Music and dance as a coalition signaling system”

Hagen & Hammerstein 2009-2010 “Did Neanderthals and other early humans sing? Seeking the biological roots of music in the territorial advertisements of primates, lions, hyenas, and wolves”

Owsley et al. 2007 “Human finger and hand bone necklaces from the Plains and Great Basin”

WEEK 9 Signaling: Mating & Reproduction

Coe 2003 “The ancestress hypothesis and visual art: An overview”


Mithen 2003 “Handaxes: The first aesthetic artifacts”

McDermott 1996 “Self-representation in Upper Paleolithic female figurines”

WEEK 10 The Artist

Humphrey 1999 “Cave art, autism, and the evolution of the human mind”

Haskovec & Sullivan 1989 “Reflections and rejections of an Aboriginal artist”

FINAL EXAM