What is this "Biological Anthropology" course all about?

Overview and Learning Objectives
How do we explain the human diversity in this world? How did we get all the different sizes, colors, and textures that we see today, and are we really all that different under our skins? Why can the Aymara people I work with move around energetically at 12,000 feet above sea level in the Bolivian highlands while it takes me days there to even walk comfortably up a small hill? How does an environment in which children are raised permanently affect their biology?

Biological Anthropology, one of the core courses in Anthropology, will introduce you to the subfield and provide you with the basics of evolutionary theory, genetics and inheritance, nonhuman primates (monkeys and apes), and the fossil hominid record, so that you can better understand the ways that human individuals and populations adapt to physical and cultural environments. We will explore the concept of “race” biologically and culturally and study the effects of human genetics and the many aspects of our physical bodies that are products of our environments rather than our genes.

Throughout the semester, we will develop the necessary skills to fully consider humans as biocultural beings, neither solely products of our biology nor our culture, but a dynamic combination of the two. We will also explore the ways in which science is represented in the popular press, how science is a product of culture and focus on critically evaluating material presented in scholarly and popular venues. More than anything, we will heavily engage with the question: What does it mean to be human?

Instructor Contact Information

Deborah E. Blom, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Anthropology
University of Vermont
Department of Anthropology

Please seek me out whenever you need help. I may not be able to drop everything and help you right that second, but I will do so as soon as possible. Here are options for contacting me. **So I can best focus my energies on you, I just ask that you please look through the resources I provide (e.g., your syllabus, Getting Started, the Discussion Board, the textbooks, dictionaries or glossaries, or links to the reference librarian) beforehand.**

Email: dblom@uvm.edu. This works best for quick personal communications.

Phone: If you would like to talk by phone (and there are many good reasons to do so), please send an email to make an appointment for me to call you. Be sure to leave your number and, if you call back
and I don’t answer, leave a message (or text). This works best if you need a dialogue (or feel alienated by all the electronic communication and want to hear a human voice!)

Meeting: If you are local and would like to meet individually or with a group of classmates, please let me know.

Discussion Board: You can pose a question on the General Logistics/Questions forums under the Discussion Board (link to the left). This is a great place to post if you think there may even be one other student with the same question. Also, a kind classmate might answer your question more quickly than I can.

Addressing Me: Please feel free to call me “Deborah” (if you don’t feel comfortable doing so, “Dr. Blom” is fine too).

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Class Schedule

Online May 21- June 15.
There is no set time of day that the class meets and, assuming you can devote the amount of time needed within a 24 hour period, the class can easily accommodate any individual schedule. Please be aware of the following dates, which occur in the two weeks of class.

Add/Drop Deadlines (The course will not appear on your transcript and you are eligible for a full refund):
- Last Day to Add - May 22
- Last Day to Drop - May 23

Withdraw Deadlines (your transcript will have a "W" recorded):
- Last Day for 50% Refund - May 24
- Last Day for 25% Refund - May 28
- Last Day to Withdraw - June 07

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How this Class is Set Up

The course is comprised of a series of folders which roughly correspond to chapters 1-11 in the Larsen textbook. While deadlines are spread out into approximately weekly chunks, you are expected to put in several hours a day on the course. If you were taking the course face to face, we would be meeting four days a week for 2.75 hrs (11 hours/week) and then estimates for homework in a college course are 2-3 hours for every hour in class (22-33 hours per week), which technically brings us to 33-44 hours per week over four weeks. This means that you will have to plan your time wisely. Usually this means covering about a chapter a day with a couple of days for each exam. All the materials for each section can be found in the Course Materials link (to the left) and the list of assignments and a detailed schedule can be found in Course Schedule (link to left).

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Readings and Other Materials

The assigned readings for this course are from the text, published articles in scholarly venues and popular press, websites, and film clips. They serve several functions. Some are readings designed to teach content at face value (e.g., the Larsen text). Others bring in additional perspectives and/or content, present the material in different ways (written, audio and video), and provide opportunities to think critically and explore the representation of anthropology in popular media. In some cases, you will be asked to absorb and understand information, but I will often ask you to step back and analyze the sources, rather than take them at face value.
For the class, you should get the following textbook as well as an online tool called InQuizitive.


The book can be purchased as a paperback and/or as an e-book. Your options are to get one of these (see http://books.wwnorton.com/books/webad-detail-editions.aspx?id=4294997883 for all options):

- the e-book (comes with InQuizitive; ISBN 978-0-393-66742-4) (add looseleaf for $15)
- a used or rented paperback or e-book and, if it doesn't have a fresh InQuizitive code, get InQuizitive from the Norton website (see Purchase Option on the right at digital.wwnorton.com/essanthro4)

Textbooks can be purchased from the UVM bookstore, Norton, or any textbook vendor, such as Amazon. Some students ask if they can use an earlier version of the text. It is not ideal but can work as a last option.

Note: We use textbooks and select popular sources (e.g., Newsweek, National Geographic, Wikipedia) in this class because they are easily accessible and allow for a broad view of what is available. However, it should be noted that these sources are rarely suitable on their own for research papers in college classes (unless you are using them to demonstrate what is in the popular press). Instead, you should reference the scholarly literature that these sources cite, as well as others available through your library access (see the UVM Library for more information). Please ask if you have any questions about this.

**Assigned Work**

Grades will be assigned based on the following work (see Class Schedule for specific due dates):

**InQuizitive (20%)**

Each chapter includes section in InQuizitive. According to its developer, InQuizitive is "a formative, adaptive quizzing tool that ... ensure(s) students come prepared to lectures, quizzes, and exams" (and they claim it improved student scores by nearly a letter grade). Students have found it to be an engaging and interactive way to test understanding of the material in the Larsen text. The biggest nerds among us find the way you can bet points based on how well you know the material to be addictive and fun. The Inquisitive modules are due for each chapter. Their purpose will be to measure your preparation and effort, so grades are focused mainly on completion. In theory, everyone can get 100%, as long as you begin your attempts before the due date and finish before the exam for that section.

**Class Discussion (25%)**

The Discussion Board (link to left) is essentially our learning community (note: this is unlike a face-to-face class, where you can often be fairly passive and still earn a solid grade). For full credit, you will post to at least one of the chapter discussion boards in each of the three parts of the course (I: Chapters 1-4, II: Chapters 5-8, III: Chapters 10-12). In each of your three chosen Discussion Boards, spread over the semester, you will need to write a longer initial post, addressing the material in some significant way (e.g., posts on concepts you are finding challenging or intriguing or responses to focused questions located in the Course Materials), as well as at least two responses engaging your classmate's posts. Although it is not required, you are welcome and encouraged to be active on all discussions. [To clarify: a hypothetical student might write three posts on Chapter 3, three posts on chapter 8, and three posts on Chapter 11]. I will be looking for signs that you have thought
about the text in some detail and that you are listening carefully to what your classmates are saying and taking their views into consideration. Citing sources is important as well.

Discussion grades will be assigned at the end of Part I using the rubric in the Grading Criteria link and adjusted at the end of the course to account for improvement. If work is late or incomplete your grade will be adjusted down as outlined.

**Exercises (25%)**
Exercises are designed for you to more fully get into the material by applying it to solve a problem or thinking critically and reflectively on a topic. This will also include more focused multiple choice tests or problem sets when the material is very fact based. You may use any resources (e.g., your text, the Blackboard site) to complete the tests, but you should be careful not to plagiarize (and this includes paraphrase plagiarism - you need to show me that you understand the material, not that you can just copy from a book and change the wording!), so cite your sources. Late work will only be granted in the case of crises documented by your Student Services office.

**Exams (30%)**
There will be three exams to break up the course and conclude groups of information. They will include multiple choice and essay questions as well as, in the case of the third part, a lab-type question in which you look at a picture of a fossil and argue to which species it likely belongs. The exams are not cumulative and will cover all class materials. As with the exercises, you may use any resources, and you should cite your sources. No late exams will be given.

**Extra Credit (up to 5% toward final grade)**
To earn extra credit, you may post on the extra credit discussion boards up to five threads throughout the semester for a maximum of 5% (threads can come from items on biological anthropology that you have seen in the popular press or research into areas not covered in the class material (e.g., evolutionary psychology or sex-based neuroscience or the latest fossil find and what it means...the sky is the limit). These threads should be fairly substantial and can boost your final grade 1% each.

*Please see the "Grading Criteria and Suggestions" link to the left for more information*

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**Grading Criteria and Suggestions and Policies Regarding Missed or Late Work**
Please see the "Grading Criteria and Suggestions" link to the left for information

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**Academic Integrity, Civility, & Copyright Policies Agreement**
Students are expected to adhere to UVM's Code of Academic Integrity policy in this class. Plagiarism and copying will not be tolerated. Although it is painful, I do turn students in for lack of academic integrity. As always, UVM students, faculty and staff are also bound by Our Common Ground in the way that we conduct ourselves.

Students failing to agree to these policies by clicking on the link above will be asked to drop the class. Please note that this may appear as a zero in the grade book since there are no points associated with although it is required. After taking this (or any test) click on the OK in order to get feedback on your answers.

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**Online Learning: What is it all about?**
For those interested in pedagogy and the philosophy of online teaching and learning, you might like to skim the article The Constructivist Approach and Online Learning from the Tomorrow's Professor Blog.
Accommodations for Disabilities, Religious Holidays, or Travel for Sport Teams

I am more than happy to make extra arrangements for students with documented disabilities, religious holidays and those requiring out-of-town travel to attend your games. I just need you to communicate your needs in a timely fashion. In keeping with University policy, any student with a documented disability interested in utilizing accommodations should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) Office. SAS works with students and faculty in an interactive process to explore reasonable and appropriate accommodations, which are communicated to faculty in an accommodation letter. All students are strongly encouraged to meet with their faculty to discuss the accommodations they plan to use in each course. A student’s accommodation letter lists those accommodations that will not be implemented until the student meets with their faculty to create a plan. Contact SAS: A170 Living/Learning Center; 802-656-7753; access@uvm.edu; or www.uvm.edu/access
Work should be completed by 11:59pm on its due date unless otherwise noted. I used to set daily deadlines for this class but have changed the structure to allow you more flexibility for travel, work, etc. However, I strongly suggest that you set up your own daily schedule, for example setting aside a day for each chapter.

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<td>Friday 5/25</td>
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<td>Darwin vs. Lamarck Ann Landers Chapter 3 Test</td>
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<td>Wednesday 5/30</td>
<td>Exam I (Opens 5/29 at 11:59pm. Due by 5/31 8:00am) After noon on 5/30: no credit for assigned work for Part I (exercises/discussion/IQ above); as always, late work will still be penalized</td>
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<td>Exam II (opens 6/6 at 11:59pm. Due by 6/8 at 8:00am) No credit for assigned work for Part II turned in after noon on 6/7</td>
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<td>Friday 6/15</td>
<td>Exam III (includes Little People of Flores film and an article. Opens 6/14 at 11:59pm. Due by 6/16 at 8:00am) No credit late assigned work for Part III turned in after noon on 6/15</td>
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