

University of Houston, Being Human (ANTH 3396-13064), Spring 2019. Th 1-4pm (AH 303). For any question email [loliva@uh.edu](mailto:loliva@uh.edu). Office hours after class or by appointment (McElhinney Hall 232A).

# Being Human

Dr. Luca Oliva

## Course Description

This course considers what it means to be human in the 21st century. We will focus on the mind and evolution of the human species by combining and comparing theories from interdisciplinary fields such as cognitive anthropology, philosophy of mind, psychology, linguistics, and neuroscience, among others. After the introduction (D'Andrade), the course addresses basic and advanced issues of cognitive anthropology and philosophy of mind. First, we will study the mind-body problem (Churchland, Descartes, Heil), the question of consciousness (Blackmore, Kim), and cultural schema theory (Quinn). Then, we will turn to the nature of our mind by discussing such topics as perceptionism (Kolak & Others), behaviorism and functionalism (Heil, Kim, Putnam), and alternative models of intelligence such as AI and collective mind (Bentley, Dennett, Searle). This latter topic will also be approached through the movie 'The Imitation Game' on the life and work of Alan Turing. Next, the course concludes with the theory of evolution from Darwin to Chomsky and Dawkins. Finally, we will consider the linguistic and cultural implications of evolution (Storey, Quinn) to understand the ongoing cultural changes that characterize our human species since our beginnings.

## Schedule and Topics

Jan 17	Introduction
Jan 23	Cognitive Anthropology (D'Andrade)
Jan 31	The Mind-Body Problem (Churchland, Descartes, Heil)
Feb 7	Consciousness (Blackmore, Kim)
Feb 14	Perceptionism (Kolak & Others)
Feb 21	Behaviorism (Heil, Kim, Putnam)
Feb 28	Functionalism (Heil, Kim, Putnam)
Mar 7	Machines and Collective Mind (Bentley, Dennett, Searle)
Mar 21	AI (The Imitation Game)
Mar 28	Evolutionism (Howard, Dawkins)
Apr 4	Language and Evolution (Chomsky)
Apr 11	Cultural Evolution (Guest Lecture: Rebecca Storey)
Apr 18	Evolutionary Schema Theory (Guest Lecture: Naomi Quinn)
Apr 25	LGBTQ Identity (Case Study)

## Assessments and Assignments

Here is the list of assignments and their corresponding value. (1) Attendance and participation (20%), (2) a summary of one class subjects (20%), (3) a team-worked PowerPoint presentation on any case study of cognitive anthropology (20%), (4) an argumentative and comprehensive final paper (3000 words) on the theoretical parts of the class (40%). Please, submit your final paper on Blackboard Learn via Turn-It-In. Late submissions are strongly discouraged and penalized but accepted. The attendance is mandatory but can be waived by the teacher for justified cases; otherwise, exceptions require a medical note.

Plagiarism or other forms of cheating will be reported and penalized. Look at the College (CLASS) bylaws for details on academic honesty, disabilities, and other matters about students and life on campus.

## Bibliography

All the due readings are available on blackboard learn. Below is their list, which includes other relevant (but optional) references. New readings could be added after the lectures of our invited speakers.

- R. Alexander Bentley, Mark Earls, Michael J. O'Brien, *I'll Have What She's Having Mapping Social Behavior* (MIT 2011).
- Susan Blackmore, *Consciousness. A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford 2005).
- Noam Chomsky, Marc D. Hauser, W. Tecumseh Fitch, "The Faculty of Language: What Is It, Who Has It, and How Did It Evolve?". *Science* 298, 2002: 1569-79.
- Paul M. Churchland, *Matter and Consciousness* (MIT 1988).
- Roy D'Andrade, *The Development of Cognitive Anthropology* (Cambridge 2003).
- Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford 1989).
- Daniel C. Dennett, *Consciousness Explained* (Back Bay Books 1992).
- René Descartes, *Philosophical Essays and Correspondence* (Hackett 2000).
- John Heil, *Philosophy of Mind. A Contemporary Introduction* (Routledge 2004).
- Andrew Hodges and Christof Teuscher (eds), *Alan Turing. Life and Legacy of a Great Thinker* (Springer 2004).
- Jonathan Howard, *Darwin* (Oxford 1982).
- Jaegwon Kim, *Philosophy of Mind* (Westview Press 2011).
- Daniel Kolak, William Hirstein, Peter Mandik, Jonathan Waskan, *Cognitive Science* (Routledge 2006).
- David B. Kronenfeld, Giovanni Bannardo, Victor C. de Munck, Michael D. Fischer (eds), *A Companion to Cognitive Anthropology* (Blackwell 2011)
- John Searle, *Minds, Brains and Science* (Harvard University Press 1984).
- Rebecca Storey and Glenn R. Storey, *Rome and the Classic Maya. Comparing the Slow Collapse of Civilizations* (Routledge 2016).
- Naomi Quinn and Claudia Strauss, *A Cognitive Theory of Cultural Meaning* (Cambridge 1997).
- David M. Rosenthal, *The Nature of Mind* (Oxford 1991).