Syllabus: First Year Seminar 121 - Everyday Evolution  
Fall Semester 2015: TR 9:30 - 10:45 a.m. Science Center K209  
Roger Laushman, Biology Dept. (x58517) Roger.Laushman@oberlin.edu  
Office Hours: M 1:30-3:30 p.m. & W 1:30-3:30, or by appointment

Course goals: This course has several related goals. The readings, discussions, and responses are intended to help you understand important concepts and processes of biological evolution in a format different from the ‘I lecture - you listen and take exams’ approach. The format is designed to facilitate interaction among all members of the class, rather than you simply listening to me. The ‘everyday’ component of the course reflects the goal to examine the relevance of evolution to many aspects of modern life. Evolution is an ongoing, dynamic process that is essential to understanding the natural world. As Dobzhansky stated in 1973, “Nothing in biology makes sense except in the light of evolution.” This course also has practical goals, such as gaining familiarity with science resources and using writing as a learning tool, as well as a means to communicate what you know and how you know it. Another important goal is to improve your ability to critique material and to convey your ideas in a seminar (discussion) format.

Five texts are required:


Moalem & Prince. 2007. Survival of the Sickest Wm. Morrow


Schedule:

9/1 Introduction of topics, format, course goals, background information.
9/3 Read the preface/introduction for each book as background general discussion.
9/8-9/24 Theme #1 – Diet & Nutrition [group editing on 9/24 – draft due 9/25]

9/8 Chapter 1 in Pollan and Chapter 2 in Moalem & Prince
9/10 Information literacy with Alison Ricker – find five primary sources on sugar and evolution and select theme topic
9/15 Chapter 4 in Zuk and Chapter 3 in Mindell – submit annotations for sugar sources and submit topic annotations
9/17 Chapters 2 & 4 in Lavers and Chapter 6 in Mindell
9/22 Chapter 5 in Zuk and Chapter 7 in Lavers
9/24 Edit theme narratives and sources for submission on 9/25
9/29-10/15 Theme #2 – Mating & Reproduction [group editing 10/15 – draft due 10/16]

9/29  Chapter 2 in Pollan and use index of Lavers
10/1  Chapter 7 in Zuk and Chapter 6 in Mindell – submit theme topic
10/6  Chapter 6 in Moalem & Prince
10/8  Chapter 2 in Mindell – submit annotations
10/13 Chapter 8 in Zuk
10/15 editing prior to submission on 10/16

10/16-10/25 – FALL BREAK

10/27-11/12 Theme #3 – “toxins” [group editing 11/12 – draft due 11/13]

10/27  Chapter 3 in Pollan and Chapter 1 in Lavers
10/29  Chapters 1& 3 in Moalem & Prince – submit theme topic
11/3  Chapter 9 in Zuk
11/5  Chapter 3 in Mindell – submit annotations
11/10 Chapters 4&7 in Moalem & Prince
11/12 editing prior to submission on 11/13

11/17-12/3 Theme #4 – Aging & Death [group editing 12/8]

11/17  Chapter 4 in Pollan
11/19  Chapter 7 in Moalem & Prince – submit theme topic
11/24  Chapter 3 in Mindell
11/26  No Class – Thanksgiving Holiday
12/1  Chapter 10 in Zuk – submit annotations
12/3  Chapter 8 in Moalem & Prince and Chapter 9 in Lavers (some material in Ch. 4)
12/8  editing prior to submission on 12/9
12/10: Synthesis and summary
12/18: Final project due at 11:00 a.m.
**Writing assignments:** You will research and document a 4-5 page topic paper for each of the four themes, using 5-10 sources from the primary literature. You will choose topic different from the one discussed in class, but related, e.g. some aspect of diet/nutrition and evolution for the first theme. Citation format will follow that of the journal *Evolution*. There will be regular group work to edit drafts.

Your written work will be submitted electronically as Word (.doc or .docx) files by the end of the day on which it is due. I will use Track Changes to provide feedback, and then return the document to you electronically.

The written material will be critiqued for substance, as well as for style: format, grammar, and syntax. Another important goal of this course is to allow you to demonstrate improved ability to critique material and to convey your ideas in both discussion and written work.

**ALL WRITTEN WORK IS TO BE 12-point Times New Roman, DOUBLE-SPACED.**

**Grading:** Grades will be determined as follows:

- Annotated sources: 50 points x 4 = 200
- Topic papers: 100 points x 4 = 400
- *Final product:* = 200
- Participation = 200
- **Total** 1,000

Grades will be based on a scale of ≥ 90% (A-/A); ≥80% = (B-/B/B+); ≥ 70% = (C-/C/C+); ≥ 63% = (D/D+) or < 70% = NE, with allowance for adjustment down (but never up).

*overall synthesis with introduction, summaries, plus revisions

This grading system is intended to encourage participation and reward progress. There are no formal exams, but I will schedule individual appointments with each of you during the semester as necessary to provide feedback and offer advice in private. You are, of course, encouraged to communicate by email or arrange office visits as needed.

Because of the important role of group discussions, attendance is required for all meetings. Unexcused absences will result in your grade being lowered by one full step.

**Information Literacy:** Learning how to use ‘information systems’ is an important mission of college and FYS teaching. Alison Ricker - OC Science Librarian - will meet with the class on 14 September to get you started with using the various resources. Your xxx will include references that you will locate by using OhioLink and other data bases.

**Honor Code:** You are expected to adhere to the Oberlin College Honor Code. You may discuss readings with your classmates, and you are encouraged to do so. However, your written responses must be your own, and must include proper citations for sources used. Additional details regarding sources and citations will be provided as necessary.