



HEB 1362

Hunter-Gatherers

Thursday 10:00am-12:00pm

MCZ 529, 24 Oxford Street

Instructor: Vivek V. Venkataraman, Ph.D.

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Office Location: 50D Peabody Museum

Office Hours: Friday 1-2pm or by appointment

Course Description: Modern industrialized life is highly unusual from an evolutionary perspective. For the vast majority of our species' history, we lived in small, mobile, social groups and subsisted on non-domesticated foods. This hunting and gathering way of life has profoundly influenced our evolved physiology, life history, psychology, and social behavior.

In this seminar, we survey hunter-gatherer populations around the globe. We focus on cross-cultural variation in foraging and subsistence, technology, life history, co-residence patterns, and social behavior. The course highlights the strengths and weaknesses of using modern hunter-gatherers as models for the past.

Readings will be generally based on the primary hunter-gatherer literature. Assignments will consist of readings and short weekly papers. Each class period is organized around a central question that we will address by watching an ethnographic film and discussing the film and the assigned readings. Students are required to read two ethnographies during the semester. For each ethnography, students will write a 4-5 page paper (see details below) and give a short presentation to the class.

Prerequisite(s): None

Text(s): *The Lifeways of Hunter-Gatherers*, 2nd Edition (2013). This text is available on reserve at Tozzer Library, but you are strongly encouraged to purchase this text as soon as possible. I will occasionally assign readings from this text, but it largely serves to help you contextualize the primary literature, and you may use it as much or as little as you wish.

Author(s): Robert L. Kelly

Opinion papers

One-page opinion papers will be due on a semi-regular basis. These must be posted to Canvas by 6pm on the Wednesday before class. These papers will form the basis for discussion during the week's class periods and are intended to improve critical reasoning capacities and writing ability. The papers should state a problem or central aspect encountered in the week's readings and lectures (or in the material covered following the previous opinion

paper), then develop a thesis with respect to the material. These should not be summaries but instead adopt a critical stance [for example: a pro or con position, expand upon a flawed assumption, reveal a gap in the literature, etc...]. The topics are completely open-ended, and you are encouraged to bring in perspectives from your daily life and current events. The papers will receive a grade between 0 (not submitted) and 10 (excellent). Proper punctuation, spelling, grammar, and creativity are part of that assessment. I will provide feedback on each paper via Canvas. The formatting requirements of the paper are as follows: Times New Roman 12-point font, 1 inch margins, double-spaced, .doc format.

Papers and presentations

Students will read two hunter-gatherer ethnographies, then write and present critical summaries on their readings. The first paper will focus on the subsistence strategies observed in the ethnography. The second paper will focus on aspects of social organization. The paper should summarize the material and strive to situate the topic in the context of hunter-gatherer studies more broadly. For those students who are so motivated, there is also the option to pursue a data-driven project using pre-existing data (e.g., cross-cultural ethnographic data, or original unpublished data shared by the instructor).

The formatting requirements of the paper(s) are as follows: 4-5 pages double spaced (not including the bibliography), Times New Roman font, 12 pt, 1 inch margins, .doc format. Adherence to these requirements will be strictly enforced.

Grade Distribution:

Opinion papers	20%
Paper 1	15%
Presentation 1	15%
Paper 2	20%
Presentation 2	15%
Participation	15%

Letter Grade Distribution:

≥ 94.00	A	74 - 76	C
90 - 93	A-	70 - 73	C-
87 - 89	B+	67 - 69	D+
84 - 86	B	64 - 66	D
80 - 83	B-	60 - 63	D-
77 - 79	C+	≤ 60	F

Course Policies:

- **Academic Integrity and Harvard Honor Code**

- Students are expected to live up to the Harvard Honor Code (<http://honor.fas.harvard.edu/honor-code>) and not participate in behaviors – including cheating and plagiarism – that compromise it. Please keep in mind the Harvard Honor Code: *"Members of the Harvard College community commit themselves to producing academic work of integrity—that is, work that adheres to the scholarly and intellectual standards of accurate attribution of sources, appropriate collection and use of data, and transparent acknowledgement of the contribution of others to their ideas, discoveries, interpretations, and conclusions. Cheating on exams or problem sets, plagiarizing or misrepresenting the ideas or language of someone else as one's own, falsifying data, or any other instance of academic dishonesty violates the standards of our community, as well as the standards of the wider world of learning and affairs."*

- **Collaboration Policy**

- Students may NOT collaborate on the weekly opinion papers. Students are expected to work individually on their papers and presentations.

- **Students with disabilities**

- Students with learning, physical, or psychiatric disabilities who may need classroom accommodations are encouraged to see me before the end of the second week of the term. Discussions will remain confidential, but the Student Accessibility Office may be consulted to discuss how to best implement the requested accommodation.

- **Religious observances**

- If you have a religious observance that may conflict with your participation in the course, please speak with me before the end of the second week of the quarter to discuss appropriate accommodations.

Tentative Course Outline: The weekly coverage might change slightly throughout the course. Be sure to check Canvas frequently for updates. Please ensure you are set to receive all notifications for the course via Canvas.

Week	Content
Week 1 (Jan 25)	• Introduction
Week 2 (Feb 1)	• NO CLASS (instructor out of town)
Week 3 (Feb 8)	• What do ethnographers do?
Week 4 (Feb 15)	• What theories help us make sense of variation among hunter-gatherers?
Week 5 (Feb 22)	• How do hunter-gatherers find food?
Week 6 (March 1)	• Why are hunter-gatherer population sizes so low?
Week 7 (Mar 8)	• Presentations on first ethnography
Week 8 (Mar 15)	• NO CLASS (Spring Break)
Week 9 (Mar 22)	• What are the conditions for egalitarianism among hunter-gatherers?
Week 10 (Mar 29)	• Are hunter-gatherers naturally peaceful or violent?
Week 11 (Apr 5)	• Why be a hunter-gatherer in the 21st century?
Week 12 (Apr 12)	• What is the future of hunter-gatherers?
Week 13 (Apr 19)	• Presentations on second ethnography