Dear Online Students,

Welcome to Physical Anthropology!

During the eight weeks of this course, we will cover a broad range of topics that encompasses today’s field of Physical Anthropology. The intent and goal of this course is two-fold: At the end of the 8-week period, you should have (1) a competent understanding of the foundational concepts of Physical Anthropology, including the forces and processes of evolution, genetics, cellular biology, and hominid evolution and (2) an exposure to many of the subfields that make up the field of Physical Anthropology. This course is designed to offer you new perspectives into what it really means to be human and perhaps inspire you to pursue other classes in Anthropology.

This course uses various tools to teach and evaluate students, including traditional methods, such as written assignments, problem sets, exams, but also alternative methods, including discussions, online activities and the use of personal blogs to present work and interact with other students and the instructor.

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There will be several ways of contacting me via Blackboard, but this email address is the most reliable way of reaching me. Get used to contacting me if you have questions. If you have problems with accessing the course itself via the Blackboard system, you need to contact Distance Learning directly via one of the links listed later in this letter below.

Material Requirements (Non-negotiable)

You must have the following materials and equipment available to you no later than the first day of class. You will not be able to take part in this class without them in your possession. This is non-negotiable. If you cannot meet these requirements, please do not register for this class.

TEXTBOOK: Introduction to Physical Anthropology 2013-2014 edition by Robert Jurmain et al, Thomson Higher Education (ISBN: 13: 978-1-285-06197-9). Currently $149.11 for new, though used copies may be available in the campus store. Barnes & Noble may also make this available through their Nook reader. This can be purchased in the COC bookstore or online. You MUST have this book in your possession by the first day of class.
HARDWARE: You must have daily access to a PC (not just a phone) equipped with reliable online access. This includes access during times when COC computer labs are closed, i.e., you cannot rely only upon COC computer access. PLEASE NOTE: Technical difficulties, such as loss of internet access, a broken computer, or “my dog ate my hard drive”, will NOT be accepted as excuses for failing to complete the required assignments. Don’t try it. I’ve heard them all.

Mac computers are notorious for having difficulty with the Blackboard platform. If you have trouble with your Mac, contact Distance Learning for solutions.

EMAIL: You must have a unique email address. The email address cannot be shared with another student enrolled in this class.

INTERNET BROWSERS: I strongly encourage my students to use the browsers Firefox or Google Chrome (both available free online) which have had fewer complications with the websites you will be accessing in this class (I’m not familiar with Navigator). I do not recommend using Internet Explorer. If you do choose to use Internet Explorer and experience problems, please try the other browsers before contacting me for help.

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Taking an Online Course – PLEASE READ CAREFULLY!

There are many advantages to taking an online course for students with demanding schedules, but it is imperative that you understand before the class begins what will be required of you in order to do well in this class. Please note the following:

- This is a short-term course, meaning that instead of the customary 16 week semester, the course length has been reduced to 8 weeks.
- The amount of material covered in this 8-week course is IDENTICAL to the amount covered in a 16-week traditional course. That means you will be covering twice as much material each week.
- The amount of time you should expect to dedicate to this class/week will vary according to your individual abilities (such as reading comprehension skills and comfort with technology) but on average, you should expect to invest about 18 hours per week to successfully complete this course. This time will be distributed across reading assignments, online activities, taking part in discussion groups, submitting homework, and taking quizzes and tests.
- This course will be conducted 100% online. There will be no face-to-face component required or offered.
- In order to pass this course, you will need to complete all assignments (including exams) thoroughly and accurately and submit them to me before their deadline.
Successfully completing an online course requires a student to develop and use strong self-organizational skills in order to stay on top of assignments and to avoid falling behind. If you find it easy to self-motivate and can plan and stick to a study schedule, than you will do well in an online course. If self-motivation is not one of your strengths, you need to develop those skills now! Please take the following recommendations to heart:

- Keep a calendar of all homework, discussion, and exam deadlines. This can be written or you can use an online calendar, complete with emailed reminders.
- Complete readings no later than the Monday of each week they are due. That way you can take part more effectively in the online discussion. You will also find that homework assignments are easier to complete.
- Get used to emailing me with questions. Please don’t be shy. I find that those students who freely communicate with me regarding questions or confusion on the material tend to be the ones who do better in this class.
- If you are struggling with the material in the class, don’t wait for several weeks to contact me about your concerns. This is a short class. We don’t have time to “wait and see” if those problems will work themselves out.
- Get to know your fellow students. If the opportunity arises, organize a study group at the local coffee shop or library to review material and study for exams. This is the best way to learn the material. This course may be completely online, but there is nothing stating that you must study that way.

To get a better picture of your readiness for an online course, particularly if you have never taken one before, please use this link to take a short evaluation on your on-line readiness: Are You Online Ready?

Should you have any technical difficulties accessing this online course throughout the semester, please do NOT contact your instructor as I cannot promise positive results! Please refer to the following links and use them to resolve any technical problems you might have:

- General Information about Distance Learning at COC
- Direct logon to Blackboard
- Blackboard Assistance
- Computer hardware and software requirements
- Counseling 070 information

If you are a student with special needs and require additional assistance for this course specific to your circumstances, please contact the Tutoring, Learning & Computing Center (TLC). Click the link provided or call them at 661-362-3351. They also have offices at both the Valencia and Canyon Country campuses.
How to Negotiate the First Day of Class

I strongly recommend that you practice logging onto Blackboard the week prior to the start of class, to make sure all problems are addressed before the first day. This is especially important if you have never taken an online class before. For help, you can use the link above or contact the Blackboard Help Desk in the Tutoring, Learning & Computing Center (TLC) at 661-362-3351, extension 3344 for assistance.

There are three different scenarios for the first day of class. Follow the one that applies to you:

If you are officially enrolled in this class: Login to Blackboard between 6 am and 11:59 pm on the first day and complete all initial procedures, including entering a valid email address into the “Tools” area of Blackboard. From the introduction page, click on the “Start Here” button. Follow all instructions on that page to follow check-in procedures. Failing to meet these initial Day 1 requirements will result in your designation as a “No Show” and you will be dropped from the class roster. I will be unable to reinstate your name to the roster after that point. There is a waitlist for this class filled with students who would love to take your spot on the roster.

If you are waitlisted for this class: Email the instructor on the first day of class between 6 am and 9 pm to request an ADD code. After the 9 pm deadline, the instructor will evaluate how many spots are available on the class roster, determine how many of the waitlisted students can be added, and email an ADD code to those students. Waitlisted students will be added in order of their position on the waitlist and there is no guarantee that all waitlisted students will receive an ADD code as it is subject to roster space. Students who receive an ADD code should complete registrations procedures immediately and purchase the textbook no later 6 pm on Thursday of the first week. It usually takes approximately 24 hours for your name to be added into Blackboard. Check back frequently and when you have access to the course online via Blackboard, complete the Day 1 requirements listed above. You will need to move quickly to catch up with the rest of the class.

If you are registered as a COC student but not enrolled in this class: You may email the instructor to request a CRASH code during the first day of class (6 am to 9 pm). You will be emailed with a crash code ONLY IF there is room on the roster after all waitlisted students who have requested an ADD code have registered. There is an extensive waitlist for this class, so it is unlikely that there will be space available, but you are welcome to email me with the request. It doesn’t hurt to ask! If you are given a CRASH code, register, purchase the textbook and then work on catching up. You will be responsible for all course requirements, regardless of when you started the class.

Regardless of your situation, you MUST have a textbook for this class and complete all Day 1 procedures. All students are responsible for all assignments, even if you add after the first day.
Use Your Head... Self-advocate!

Be aware that taking an online course is very different from taking a course on campus. An online course has advantages in terms of flexibility (and the added bonus of taking exams in your pajamas), but there are aspects of online classes that can be more difficult than on-campus classes. Online students must be self-motivated and capable of tracking assignments and evaluations on their own. This requires the ability to stay organized and focused without weekly lectures to provide regular reminders and guidance. You will be expected to take responsibility for your progress in this class, completing the readings and assignments on time, and planning ahead for exams to make sure you take them within the required time limits. You must be your own advocate, contacting me with any difficulty or complications. I can help you through problems but only if you take the initiative to contact me first.

I will be emailing the course syllabus to all registered students one week prior to class. Make sure you take the time to review it and note that you are expected to have the first reading done by Day 1 of class. Please email me with any questions you might have. Otherwise, I look forward to “meeting” everyone on the first day of class.

Laurie Rodriguez