

University of Oxford

**Human Sciences
Preliminary Course Handbook**



2025–2026

Human Sciences Preliminary Course

Course handbook published in 2025

For students due to graduate in 2028

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Welcome to the first year of the Human Sciences Course.

We hope that you find this handbook helpful.

Format of the Handbook

Anything printed in bold in this handbook (other than headings) is or has the status of a formal regulation.

Ordinary print is used for descriptive and explanatory matter.

Italics are used (apart from for headings or titles of publications) to give warning of particular points of which you should be aware.

This handbook applies to students starting the course in Michaelmas Term 2025. The information in this handbook may be different for students in other years.

The Examination Regulations relating to this course are available at:
<https://examregs.admin.ox.ac.uk/Regulation?code=peinhumascie&srchYear=2025&srchTerm=1&year=2025&term=1>

*If there is a conflict between information in this handbook and the Examination Regulations then you should follow the Examination Regulations.
If you have any concerns please contact Sarah-Jane White (see below).*

This handbook contains information about the Preliminary course structure and should be read in conjunction with the Undergraduate Handbook for Human Sciences.

The information in this handbook is accurate as at October 2025; however it may be necessary for changes to be made in certain circumstances, as explained at www.ox.ac.uk/coursechanges. If such changes are made the department will publish a new version of this handbook together with a list of changes and students will be informed.

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1. Course Aims and Learning Outcomes

The programme aims to:

- produce graduates competent to analyse the problems facing humankind as biological and social animals and to take this expertise into the professions and public life;
- teach all aspects of the course taking into account the recent significant advances in techniques, information and ideas in its component parts and to integrate these to form a holistic view of Human Sciences;
- enable students to draw upon key aspects of a number of disciplines to develop a multi-disciplinary understanding of problems within the Human Sciences and their application to issues of wider concern;
- provide opportunities for students to develop a wide range of intellectual and other skills transferable to many jobs and professions.

Programme Outcomes:

By the end of the course students will have developed a good understanding of:

- Biology, Demography, Genetics, Sociology, Anthropology and Quantitative Methods relevant to Human Sciences, by a combination of lectures, practical classes and tutorials in year;
- the ethical, political and cultural problems associated with humans as biological and social animals; the role of Human Scientists, by the discussion of these themes during lectures (where appropriate), by special lectures and seminars given in the University and advertised to Human Scientists and especially by tutorial discussion. The students organise annual interdisciplinary symposiums, usually held in Hilary Term, with distinguished speakers when they are joined by Human Sciences students from UCL, affording an opportunity for exchange of views and ideas between the groups.

Skills and other attributes

Students will have the opportunity to develop the following skills during the course:

- to read and evaluate original research articles;
- to approach all topics with an informed understanding of statistics and probability;
- to consider problems in Human Sciences from an interdisciplinary point of view;
- to present a written argument on reading from a variety of sources;
- to understand scientific methods.

2. Organisation of the First Year

The Human Sciences Prelims course comprises three terms of instruction for undergraduates who have just come up to Oxford. The course is designed to ensure you have a broad knowledge of the Human Sciences before you go on to do the main core papers and the option papers in the 2nd and 3rd year. There are three components of teaching: lectures, practicals, and tutorials.

Lectures

The majority of lectures will be in-person but a few may be on-line. Most lectures will be recorded and the recordings will be made available through Canvas later for revision purposes. Regular e-mails will be sent out to inform you when lecture recordings become available. You should refer to the lecture timetables and the Academic Administrator's weekly e-mails for details of how and where lectures will be given.

Please remember that the lectures have to cater for undergraduates with widely differing prior qualifications; therefore some courses may appear easy to start with, others difficult. You should aim to attend all the lectures listed for the Prelims course. Not only will it give you the full breadth of coverage of the course, but you will be examined on the material covered in lectures at the end of the year.

Practicals

Genetics and physiology practicals are a compulsory part of the course, and you will be asked to complete written exercises for some practicals. (N.B. Completion of practical and associated exercises are an examination requirement.)

Tutorials

Tutorials are a distinctive feature of undergraduate education at Oxford and are intended not only to provide an opportunity for deeper study of specific topics, but to refine students' analytical and critical skills. Essay topics are set by the tutor. Work for a tutorial essay involves library search, reading, thinking and writing. Tutorials are not a substitute for lectures, but develop articulateness, the capacity to think independently and to judge the soundness of ideas and data presented in books and research journals. These are usually arranged by your college.

You will have some guidance on how to approach the different subjects concerned at a "Study Skills" class on Friday of Week 0 (6 October) at 2 pm in the Pauling Centre.

It is important to emphasize that the exact number of tutorials per paper may vary in different colleges partly because undergraduate needs vary and also because the advice Tutors give may vary from college to college. The following should therefore only be taken as a guide.

It is also worth noting that for the majority of your tutorials you will be asked to write an essay. However in some cases, you may be asked to write notes for a discussion or a presentation or do calculations or interpret results for Demography or Statistics. It is the tutor's decision but there is no harm in asking them or your Director of Studies if you could sometimes vary the format of your tutorials.

Approximate Number of Tutorials per Paper

(N.B. The exact number you will have may vary from college to college; in some cases there may be a fourth tutorial without a written assignment)

Ecology and Evolution:

3 tutorials on Ecology

3 tutorials on Evolution (including 1 on human evolution)

Physiology and Genetics:

3 tutorials on Physiology

3 tutorials on Genetics

Society, Culture and Environment:

4 tutorials on Social & Cultural Anthropology

2 tutorials on Human Geography

Sociology and Demography:

3 tutorials on Sociology

4 tutorials on Demography

Quantitative Methods for the Human Sciences:

15 tutorial classes (6 each in Michaelmas and Hilary Terms and 3 in Trinity Term)

These may be distributed as follows:

Michaelmas Term: 15, Hilary Term: 15, Trinity Term: 10

Reading for Lectures and Tutorials

The titles of lectures and basic texts mentioned in this handbook should give you a start. Reading lists can be found on Canvas and or/ORLO. Further suggestions of more specialised readings will be made by lecturers and tutors during the course, but you should attempt to spread your reading as broadly as possible.

Lecture Attendance

It is essential to try to attend all lectures. In many cases lectures are the source of factual information which is then used for discussion in tutorials and tutors will expect it of you. Additionally, lecture material forms the basis for exam questions. At the start of the course it may not always be clear to you why you have been asked to attend a particular series of lectures. However, as you proceed through the course the interrelationships between different subjects will become more apparent and the reasons why you are asked to attend certain lectures should become clearer.

Student Involvement

The Joint Consultative Committee (JCC), comprising both students and staff, meets each term. In Michaelmas Term second years are invited to stand as JCC representatives. JCC reps. are elected by all JCC members and serve for one year from Hilary Term. They chair the JCC meeting and represent the JCC at the termly meeting of the Institute. All undergraduates are automatically members of the JCC, and you are strongly encouraged to attend meetings which provide an opportunity to express your views about the course and discuss issues such as the syllabus, lectures, library facilities, or exams.

The Pauling Centre

The Pauling Centre, 58a Banbury Road, is where many of the Human Sciences lectures are held. It also provides a tutorial room, library, the administration office and a kitchen where tea and coffee are available for a small contribution. Please see Sarah-Jane White (sarah-jane.white@ihs.ox.ac.uk) if you have any questions or problems.

Recommended Patterns of Teaching for the Preliminary Examination in Human Sciences (Year 1)

Paper	Term	Dept/ Faculty		College	Comments
		Lectures	Practicals / Classes	Tutorials	<i>Figures in this table are in hours unless otherwise stated.</i>
[1.] Ecology and Evolution	MT	15	5	6	
	HT	8			
	TT				
[2.] Physiology and Genetics	MT	32		6	
	HT	8	10		
	TT	3	3		
[3.] Society, Culture and Environment	MT	8		6	
	HT	11			
	TT				
[4.] Sociology and Demography	MT	4		7	
	HT	4			
	TT	8			
[5.] Quantitative Methods for the Human Sciences	MT	6		6	Tutorials for this paper are in the form of larger, centrally organised classes
	HT	6		6	
	TT	3		3	
	TT				
<u>Notes</u> Tutorial arrangements (including the term tutorials are given and the exact number) will vary from college to college					

3. Prelims Lectures

Please note that the following lists or synopses of lectures should only be taken as guidelines. It is possible that the content or order of lectures may change slightly when the time comes. The venue and time of each lecture series will be found on the timetable.

Paper 1: Ecology and Evolution

Canvas: <https://canvas.ox.ac.uk/courses/296063>

Overall Course coordinator: Professor Andrew Gosler (Dept. of Biology and Institute of Human Sciences)

I. Introduction to Ecology

Timetable: HT (8 lectures)

Lecturer: Professor Andrew Gosler (Dept. of Biology and Institute of Human Sciences)

Hilary Term

1. What is ecology? (and what isn't it?): The scope and scales of ecology, from local to global. Introducing Gaia.
2. The emergence of ecology: Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), Natural History and the roots and branches of modern ecology. The struggle to unify ecological paradigms. The role of observation, models and experiments in ecology
3. Biodiversity and Biogeography (global patterns of diversity, biomes, habitats, vicariance, endemism etc.), two views of organization of the biosphere. The functional significance of biodiversity. Six extinctions: the fossil record and a temporal perspective on Gaia.
4. Structural organisation of ecological systems: niches, populations, communities (trophic structures and the pyramid of numbers) and ecosystems.
5. An introduction to population biology: a story of cooperation and competition. Demography of natural populations; the evolution of life-history traits; spatial constraints on populations.
6. Some integrated ecological case studies.
7. The impact of humans on the biosphere: Rates and extents of biodiversity loss; anthropogenic climate change; Wilson's HIPPO and the proximate causes of biodiversity loss.

8. Ecology and conservation. The uniqueness of the sixth extinction. Introducing conservation and what's wrong with the 'concept of conservation'; the role of ecology in recognising and diagnosing environmental threats.

Ecology, the science that relates the biology of organisms to their environment, has undergone several conceptual or paradigm shifts during its 150-year history. This is reflected in the reading list, and will be explored in the course, which lays essential grounding for core elements of the Honours School, especially in Human Ecology, Ethnobiology and Conservation. Links are made with the Principles of Evolution course studied in Michaelmas Term.

Handouts and Reading Lists can be found on Canvas.

II. Principles of Evolution

Timetable: MT (7 lectures and a trip to the University Museum)

Lecturer: Professor Andrew Gosler (Dept. of Biology and Institute of Human Sciences)

1. Evolving paradigms: Four big questions, subjectivity, objectivity, the Hegelian Dialectic and the significance of evolution to joined-up thinking in the Human Sciences. The diversity of life – evolution 'explains' biodiversity; a brief history of evolutionary thought; some evidence for evolution.
2. Evolution: theories and definitions; definition of evolution; the significance of adaptation. Lamarck's theory, Darwin's theory of natural selection; the Neo-Darwinian framing or 'modern' synthesis incorporating genetics into evolutionary theory; Static and Dynamic models of evolution: incorporating gene/culture co-evolution. Epigenetics and 21st Century view: the Neo-Lamarckian revolution.
3. Adaptation: the unifying concept of evolution, or evolving the culture of Evolutionary Biology beyond the Neo-Darwinian Model. The evolution of complex traits: how do adaptations evolve? The modern synthesis; sources of genetic variation – genome evolution; evolution of gene regulation, developmental processes and phenotype evolution; mechanisms of adaptation.
4. Natural selection: modes of selection, examples of stabilising selection; examples of directional selection, an example of disruptive selection; levels of selection & where does selection act; group versus individual selection, the importance of selection in a 21st century evolutionary paradigm.

5. Perspectives on the evolution of sex, investigating adaptation: The evolution of sex and sex ratios, the importance of sexual selection as a form of gene/culture co-evolution.
6. Systematics & Speciation – Ethno-biology and the cultural significance of naming. Principles of folk taxonomy and contrasts with scientific taxonomic, nomenclatural and species concepts: classification, what is a species? Mechanisms of speciation.
7. **Natural History Museum visit: (details to follow)**
8. Rethinking adaptation - the evolution of ‘altruism’. What are the appropriate units of selection? Introducing Kin selection; Mutualism, Manipulation, and Reciprocity. Association does not prove causation.

No full understanding of humans or ecology can be possible without an appreciation of the evolutionary processes, whether Darwinian or Lamarckian, and cultural and symbolic evolution (contingent on intrinsic factors), that have shaped all of life. This course focuses on biological aspects of evolution (e.g. natural and sexual selection and the origins of genetic change), but also introduces some important philosophical issues in recent discourses on evolution including the nature and relationship between subjectivity, objectivity and symbolism essential to an appreciation of human evolution. Together with the lectures in Human Evolution given by Dr Thomas Püschel and Dr Dylan Gaffney (see below) and Genetics teaching for Paper 2, this course provides essential grounding for the Honours School. The texts in the reading list by Shapiro (2013), Noble (2006 and 2017), and Jablonka and Lamb (2006) are highly recommended as bridges between discourses in evolution, ecology, and genetics.

III. Introduction to Human Evolution

Timetable: HT (8 lectures: 60 min + 30 min practical)

Lecturer: Associate Professor Thomas Püschel and Associate Professor Dylan Gaffney (Human Sciences)

1.	Introduction to human evolutionary studies	TP and DG
2.	Primate evolution	TP
3.	Miocene apes and the earliest Pliocene hominins	TP
4.	Archaic and transitional hominins	TP
5.	The emergence of the genus <i>Homo</i>	TP
6.	Middle Pleistocene hominins	DG
7.	Neanderthals and Denisovans	DG
8.	Our species — <i>Homo sapiens</i>	DG

Reading List

Reading lists and other material relating to these lectures can be found on Canvas

Paper 2: Physiology and Genetics

Canvas: <https://canvas.ox.ac.uk/courses/294204>

Course Coordinator: Dr Teresa Street, Institute of Human Sciences

I. Introduction to Physiology

Convenor: Professor Nicola Smart (DPAG)

Timetable: MT (21 lectures)

Lecturers: Professor David Paterson (DP), Professor Robert Wilkins (RW), Professor Pawel Swietach (PS), Associate Professor Simon Butt (SB), Dr Simon Bossi (SBo), Professor Neil Herring (NH), Associate Professor Nick Talbot (NT), Professor Nicola Smart (NS), Associate Professor Lisa Heather (LH), Associate Professor Kerry Walker (KW), Associate Professor Heidi De Wet (HDW), Associate Professor Helen Christian (HC) (all Department of Physiology, Anatomy and Genetics)

1.	Introduction to physiology	DP
2.	Cellular physiology	RW
3.	Excitable Tissues: Nerve and muscle	PS
4.	Motor systems 1: Spinal cord	SB
5.	Motor systems 2: Higher control systems	SBo
6.	Autonomic nervous system	NH
7.	Regulation of respiratory function	NT
8.	Regulation of cardiovascular function	NH
9.	Cardiovascular disease	NS
10.	Physiological biochemistry: Glucose homeostasis, muscle metabolism 1	LH
11.	Integration of physiological systems: Exercise and altitude 1	NH
12.	Integration of physiological systems: Exercise and altitude2	NH
13.	Physiological biochemistry: Glucose homeostasis, muscle metabolism 2	LH
14.	Endocrine regulation 1	HDW
15.	Endocrine regulation 2	HDW
16.	Hunger	HDW
17.	Sensory systems: Audition	KW
18.	Sensory systems: Vision	KW
19.	Reproduction 1	HC

20.	Reproduction 2	HC
21.	The kidneys and the regulation of the internal milieu	RW

II. Physiology Practicals

Timetable: HT (1 three-hour practical) and TT (1 three-hour practical)

Organiser: Professor Robert Wilkins (DPAG)

III. Genetics Introductory Lecture

A lecture given by Dr Teresa Street, the Course Coordinator, will be held at the beginning of the term to introduce you to the first year Genetics lecture series and take you through some of the technical terms which will be used throughout the course.

See also: Penguin Reference Dictionary of Biology 11th edition, 2004 for some of the technical terms used, and
Fletcher, Hugh; Hickery, Ivor and Winter, Paul. 2012 (4th edition). *Instant Notes in Genetics*. BIOS Scientific Publishers Ltd.

IV. DNA is the Code of Life

Timetable: MT (10 lectures)

Lecturers: Professor Lars Jansen (LJ), and Associate Professor Lidia Vasilieva (LV) (Both Dept. of Biochemistry)

1.	Introduction to DNA: structure and function	LJ
2.	Fundamentals of DNA Replication	LJ
3.	Introduction to bacterial transcription (RNA Synthesis)	LJ
4.	Fundamentals of translation (protein synthesis)	LJ
5.	Introduction to gene regulation in bacteria	LJ
6.	Function and combinatorial action of transcription factors	LJ
7.	Mechanisms of transcription and RNA processing in eukaryotes	LJ
8.	Chromatin structure and gene expression	LJ
9.	DNA in the lab I	LV
10.	DNA in the lab II	LV

V. The Dynamic Genome

Timetable: HT (4 lectures)

Lecturers: Dr Naomi Petela (Dept. of Biochemistry)

1. Genomes, their sequencing and analysis
2. Genome organisation and evolution
3. Mutations and genome stability
4. Gene editing and synthetic genomes

VI. From Genotype to Phenotype

Timetable: HT (4 lectures)

Lecturer: Associate Professor Alison Woollard (Department of Biochemistry)

1. Genetic analysis what, why and how?
2. Mendelian logic and cell biology reconciled
3. Mapping genomes and exploiting other exceptions in Mendel's Laws
4. Extrachromosomal genetics

VII. Epigenetics

Timetable: TT (3 lectures)

Lecturer: Professor Hugh Dickinson (Dept. of Biology)

1. What is Epigenetics and how does it work?
2. Epigenetics in development and disease
3. Genomic imprinting and the interface between epigenetics, genetics and evolution.

VIII. Genetics Practical

Timetable: HT (1 four-hour practical)

There will also be a pre-lab session to introduce you to some of the laboratory equipment and techniques that you will use in the practical. The time of this will be announced.

Preparation:

- *Handouts* will be provided for the practical. These contain background information, aims, materials & methods, tips for analysing results, and questions for further discussion. Read the handouts (and complete any homework exercises for the HT practical) before starting practical work.
- *Bring with you:* calculator, pencil/pen, ruler, paper for note-taking, any relevant handouts & homework exercises.
- *DO NOT bring* food or drink into the lab (including water bottles).
- *Please make alternative arrangements through your Director of Studies* if you cannot make it to the practical, due to illness or unforeseen circumstances.

Assessment:

- *You are required to complete exercises for the practical.* Take notes of your methods and experimental observations during the practical which, with your results, will help you to complete the exercises.
- The written exercises will be undertaken on Canvas after the practical and will be marked by the genetics examiner.
- The examination paper for Physiology and Genetics may assess concepts covered in practicals.

PLEASE NOTE

- *Practicals are compulsory*
- *Practicals must be considered satisfactory by the examiners (achieving a mark of 60%)*
- *“Satisfactory” requires both attendance (unless there are extenuating circumstances) and completion of any exercises*
- *Exercises for practicals must be completed on Canvas by the deadline and according to the instructions provided.*

Paper 3: Society, Culture and Environment

Canvas: <https://canvas.ox.ac.uk/courses/295945>

Social and Cultural Anthropology

Course Coordinator: Dr Rosalie Allain (Institute of Social Anthropology)

I. Introduction to Anthropological Theory

Timetable: MT (8 lectures)

Lecturers: Dr Rosalie Allain (RA), Dr Charlotte Linton, Associate Professor Zuzanna Olszewska (ZO), and Dr Elizabeth Ewart (EE) (all ISCA)

1.	Introduction: Experience and Everyday Life	RA
2.	Persons and Society	RA
3.	Relations	RA
4.	Nature/Culture 1: Gender and the Body	RA
5.	Nature/Culture 2: More than Human Anthropology	RA
6.	Materiality	CL
7.	Language	ZO
8.	Anthropology and History	EE

Timetable: HT (8 lectures)

Lecturers: Dr Rosalie Allain (RA), Associate Professor David Pratten (DP), Professor Inge Daniels (ID), and Professor Alpa Shah (AS) (all ISCA).

1.	Egalitarian Societies	RA
2.	The State, Power and Resistance	RA
3.	Rationality (Witchcraft, Science and Magic)	DP
4.	Gifts and Commodities	ID
5.	Space and the Built Environment	ID
6.	Race and Racism	RA
7.	Environment	AS
8.	Globalization and Migration	RA

A reading list can be found on Canvas.

Journals

Students should enjoy reading the Royal Anthropological Institute's bimonthly popular journal *Anthropology Today*, the short posts on the Society for Cultural Anthropology's online 'Fieldsights' series, as well as browsing through professional journals such as *JRAI*, *American Ethnologist*, *American Anthropologist*, *Cultural Anthropology* and *Current Anthropology*; access these via the Bodleian's SOLO online system.

Summary

'Introduction to Anthropological Theory' looks at the principal approaches to understanding human beings in their diverse social and cultural formations. It introduces a range of key concepts, theories, debates and methods in anthropology, emphasizing the discipline's comparative and ethnographic approach.

Syllabus

This section of the paper sets out to provide a broad introduction to the field of social and cultural anthropology and to the comparative study of human beings in their diverse social and cultural formations. The paper introduces some of the principal theories, methods and approaches in anthropology: thus the course focuses on the sorts of questions anthropologists ask, and how they go about answering them, examining how ethnographic accounts enable anthropologists to make theoretical claims about the social and cultural world. The main aim is to help students towards an ability to think anthropologically.

The first part of the paper (MT) provides students with an overview of some of the major concepts, theories, themes and approaches that underpin anthropological inquiry. The second part of the paper (HT) turns to focus on defining topics in anthropological studies of socio-cultural life. Across the two terms, we will investigate key topics and problems including: the organization of society, the relationship between self and other, between nature and culture, and between society, culture and material/ecological environments, economic processes, political life, religion, as well as key anthropological methods and principles (ethnography, comparison, reflexivity). These topics and approaches are situated in historical perspective, in particular, by exploring the different ways social and cultural life has been studied from the early 20th century to today, and by discussing both classic and contemporary themes in anthropology.

The course is taught through a series of 16 lectures and 3 tutorials (with 2 further tutorials in Human Geography). Students should also make use in their own time of ethnographic films available online: for example, if you log in to SOLO, you will be able to access the Central Television Series, 'Strangers Abroad', detailing the

life and work of Baldwin Spencer, Rivers, Boas, Mead, Malinowski, and Evans-Pritchard, all key figures in the history of the discipline.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the paper students will:

- have a basic understanding of the development of anthropological theory; and some of the key debates and topics in the discipline;
- have an understanding of how anthropology can contribute to the understanding of the contemporary world;
- have a basic understanding of the role of the ethnographic method and ethnographic writing in anthropology and its relationship to theory.
- be familiar with ethnography from a broad range of contemporary human societies, with reference both to human social relationships and human relationships to their diverse material environments.

Transferable skills

Students will learn critical thinking and analytical skills, including the ability to move beyond ethnocentric assumptions in assessing different societies and cultures.

Suggested Tutorial Topics

For advice on suitable tutorial topics, tutors should contact the paper coordinator. Tutors and students should also consult recent past examination papers on the Exam Paper Archive .

Human Geography

Section Coordinator: Dr Fiona Ferbrache, Keble College

II. Contemporary International Migration

Timetable: HT

Lecturer: Professor Patricia Daley (PD) (School of Geography and the Environment)

Tutor: Dr Fiona Ferbrache (FF) (Keble College)

Lecture 1: Racialization and International Migration: Historical and contemporary perspectives	PD
Lecture 2: Borders and Contemporary International Migration:	PD
Lecture 3: Differentiated Experiences: ‘Wanted’ and ‘Unwanted’ Migrants	PD

Paper 4: Sociology and Demography

Canvas: <https://canvas.ox.ac.uk/courses/296065>

Sociology

Section Coordinator: Associate Professor Colin Mills (Department of Sociology)

I. Introduction to Sociology I

Timetable: MT (4 lectures) & HT (4 lectures)

Lecturer: Associate Professor Colin Mills (Department of Sociology)

The academic aims of the course are to introduce students to the major contemporary theories and the central concepts of sociology. These lectures deal with two of the key problems in sociology – social inequality (who gets what) and social cohesion (who does what with whom) – and their interrelatedness. The lectures illustrate the ways that sociologists investigate the implications of social stratification and cohesion for the well-being of individuals and societies in contemporary societies. It particularly aims to show how theories can be tested against empirical data.

Michaelmas Term

1. What is Sociology? Its main approaches
2. Social class and mobility
3. Patterns of crime and deviance
4. Religion and secularisation

Hilary Term

5. Education and equality of opportunity
6. Social capital and social networks
7. Health and illness
8. Patterns of employment

Key Reading (A reading list can be found on Canvas)

Key Text:

Van Tubergen, Frank, 2020, *Introduction to Sociology*, Routledge.

Demography

Section Coordinator: Associate Professor Ewa Batyra (Department of Sociology)

II. Introduction to Demography I

Timetable: TT (8 lectures)

Lecturers: Associate Professor Ewa Batyra (Department of Sociology)

Beneath the general trends of population growth and stabilization known as ‘demographic transition’, demographers have identified a diversity of patterns reflecting the combined influence of culture, biological adaptations, and socio-economic inequalities. This course provides a broad understanding of major historical and contemporary global population processes, basic measures used by demographers to understand population change, and key theories that have shaped the field. To illustrate how patterns and trends vary, examples and comparisons are drawn from both high-income and low- and middle-income countries.

The following lecture titles and order are provisional. A revised list will be made available at the start of Trinity Term.

1. Introduction to Demography
2. Age, Period, Cohort, and Lexis Diagram
3. Demographic Transition
4. Heterogeneity of Fertility Transitions
5. Population, Resources and Sustainable Development
6. Long-Term Changes in Mortality
7. Spatial and Social Patterns of Demographic Transition
8. Migration

Paper 5: Quantitative Methods for the Human Sciences

Canvas <https://canvas.ox.ac.uk/courses/294203>

Course Coordinator: Dr Lindsay Richards (Department of Sociology)

Introduction

Statistics is concerned with the analysis of data collected in experiments, surveys and other studies, and the interpretation of the results of such investigations. An understanding of the principles of statistical theory and applied statistics is of fundamental importance when analysing your own data and when interpreting results published in the scientific literature.

The course will cover a range of common techniques, including graphical techniques, for describing and analysing data. It will also cover how to interpret the results of scientific investigations. Students will learn about the types of data that are dealt with, the common methods for summarising data, and the advantages and disadvantages of these methods. The course will also cover the principles of probability theory, and students will learn about the principles of extrapolating from a sample of data to a population.

A major part of the course deals with hypothesis testing, including how to construct hypotheses and the issues that need to be considered when testing hypotheses. . There will be 15 computer-based classes, in small groups, during which students will learn how to apply these methods and how to interpret the results. Course notes and exercises are provided on the lecturer's website, which is linked from Canvas. Copies of the lecture slides will be provided on Canvas before each lecture, where there are also additional materials for self-study and revision such as videos.

I. Quantitative Methods I

Timetable: MT (6 lectures)

Lecturer: Dr Sage Boettcher (Department of Experimental Psychology)

- 1-3. Describing, visualizing and exploring data.
- 4-6. Statistical theory – data generating distributions, sampling

II. Quantitative Methods II

Timetable: HT (6 lectures)

Lecturer: Dr Sage Boettcher (Department of Experimental Psychology) and Dr Lindsay Richards (Department of Sociology)

- 1-3. Hypothesis testing – Classic and permutation-based tests
- 4-6 Modelling data, regression analysis

III. Quantitative Methods III

Timetable: TT (3 lectures)

Lecturer: Dr Lindsay Richards (Department of Sociology)

- 1-3 Modelling data continued, research methods

Text book

Agresti, Alan, and Barbara Finlay. 2013. *Statistical Methods for the Social Sciences: Pearson New International Edition*. 4th Edition.

4. Course Regulations

(Extract from *Examination Regulations 2025-26*)

Preliminary Examination in Human Sciences

1. The subjects of the examination shall be the five subjects listed below.
2. All candidates must offer all five subjects at one examination:
Provided that a candidate who has passed in three (or more) subjects but failed in the other subject (or subjects) they may offer at a subsequent examination the subjects (or subject) in which they have failed.
Candidates who pass in one or two subjects only will be required to re-sit all five subjects at a subsequent examination.
3. A candidate shall be deemed to have passed the examination if they shall have satisfied the Moderators in all five subjects *either* at one and the same examination *or* at two examinations in accordance with the proviso to cl.2.
4. In the case of candidates who have satisfied the Moderators in all five subjects in a single examination, the Moderators may award a distinction to those of special merit.
5. The examiners will permit the use of any hand-held pocket calculator subject to the conditions set out under the heading 'Use of calculators in examinations' in the *Special Regulations concerning the Examinations*

Subject 1: Ecology and Evolution

Principles of ecology: ecosystems from global to local, plant and animal communities and numbers, biotic interactions, the impact of humans on the biosphere.

Principles of evolution illustrated by examples from human and other organisms. Mechanisms of evolutionary change: selection and adaptation, evolution of sex, altruism, kin selection and co-operation. Alternative models of evolution, emphasising changing perspectives in evolutionary biology.

Principles of Human Evolution, including a theoretical and practical introduction to paleoanthropology and major evolutionary trends during the

ca. seven million years of hominin evolution.

One three-hour paper will be set.

Subject 2: Physiology and Genetics

Principles of mammalian physiology: the cell, body fluids, the cardiovascular and respiratory systems, reproduction, hunger and thirst, movement, the senses, and the integrative organization of the central nervous system.

The genetic material – its nature, mode of action, and manipulation: the chromosomal basis of heredity; molecular genetics; mapping the human genome; sex determination; mutation at the level of the gene and the chromosome.

Mendelian inheritance; genetic variation in populations and its maintenance; quantitative variation and its genetic basis.

The genome: structure, mechanisms of repair and manipulation.

One three-hour paper will be set. Candidates must submit exercises which will be made available to the examiners, showing the extent to which each candidate has pursued a satisfactory course of practical work.

Subject 3: Society, Culture and Environment

Social and Cultural Anthropology: the comparative study of the world's civilizations and peoples, including cross-cultural, power-based and gender perspectives upon social practice and theories of human life. Specific topics will include production and consumption; transactions and modes of exchange; elementary aspects of kinship and marriage; belief systems and social control; political and social organization; classification; technology and social change; material culture and ethnographic resources; the impact of colonialism; space, place and culture; environment and cultural landscapes in transition; land and property rights. Candidates will be expected to be familiar with appropriate ethnographic monographs.

Human Geography: Approaches to understanding contemporary international migration – from neo-classical to post-structuralist; forced migration, changing international, regional and national legislation and policy; diasporas and transnationalism, especially issues of identity, home

and belonging; social divisions and the experience of migration and integration addressing gender, class and ethnicity; cosmopolitan or ‘subdiverse’ cities; and state policy and the influence of nationalism ; xenophobia, economics and ethics.

One three hour paper will be set. The paper will be divided into two sections: (A) Social and Cultural Anthropology and (B) Human Geography. Candidates will be required to display knowledge of both sections, and will be required to answer at least two questions from section (A) and at least one question from section (B)

Subject 4: Sociology and Demography

Sociology: Current and classic discussions of explanatory strategies and social mechanisms, models of individual action and the consequences of aggregation. Empirical research involving these approaches in areas of substantive sociological interest such as social class, ethnicity, religion, the family, politics.

Demography: elementary aspects of population analysis. Comparative study of fertility, mortality and family systems in selected human societies. The long term development of human population and its relation to habitat and resources. The demographic transition.

One three hour paper will be set. The paper will be divided into two sections: (A) Sociology and (B) Demography. Candidates will be required to display knowledge of both sections.

Subject 5: Quantitative Methods for the Human Sciences

As specified for the “Introduction to Probability Theory and Statistics” paper for the Preliminary Examination in Psychology, Philosophy, and Linguistics.

5. Examinations

Practical Information on taking exams can be found at

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/completing-an-exam>

Exam Dates

The Preliminary Examinations for Human Sciences are normally held at the end of Trinity Term (Weeks 8 and 9)

Examination Conventions

Examination conventions are the formal record of the specific assessment standards for the course or courses to which they apply. They set out how your examined work will be marked and how the resulting marks will be used to arrive at a final result and classification of your award. They include information on: marking scales, marking and classification criteria, scaling of marks, progression, resits, use of viva voce examinations, penalties for late submission and penalties for over-length work. The full Examination Conventions for the Preliminary Examination in Human Sciences can be found on Canvas at <https://canvas.ox.ac.uk/courses/296066>

Marking Scheme

Papers 1 and 2

(a) Short Answers

This part of Papers 1 and 2 carries a possible 40 marks. There being ten questions, all of which must be attempted, each question is allocated up to four marks. The following marking scheme is applied for this part of each paper:

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| 0 | no answer or a wrong answer |
| 1 | a poor answer |
| 2 | an adequate answer |
| 3 | a good, substantially accurate answer |
| 4 | an excellent answer |

Examiners may award intermediate marks (e.g. 1.5, 2.5) to allow greater precision.

(b) Essay Questions

The remaining part of each paper carries a possible 60 marks. Candidates must attempt three questions, to each of which 20 marks are allocated. The following marking scheme has been adopted for this part of Papers 1 and 2.

The equivalent % score for each mark are indicated and markers are expected to use the indicative descriptions in making their judgments on which mark to award.

The criteria should be viewed in a cumulative manner, and the majority of positive criteria within a mark band (and those below it) should be satisfied in order for a mark in that band to be awarded.

Markers may allocate a score that falls between the stated bands (e.g. 13.5 marks, equivalent to 67.5%) if the work fulfils some but not all of the criteria for the mark band above.

0 (0%)	no answer.
1 (5%)	barely an answer.
2 (10%)	a very poor answer with little of relevance in the answer and/or wrong.
3 (15%)	very poor answer, with perhaps one relevant point mentioned.
4 (20%)	a poor answer, with little relevance, and typically with substantial errors.
5 (25%)	a poor answer, but showing some knowledge and relevant facts, although possibly with substantial errors.
6 (30%)	an unsatisfactory answer, but showing some knowledge and containing some relevant material but lacking detail or with errors.
7 (35%)	a weak answer, not judged worthy to have passed, but close.
8 (40%)	Threshold for a Pass. A just adequate answer, showing some knowledge but with several omissions, lacking detail and/or carrying much superfluous material, and/or some errors.
9 (45%)	an adequate answer, demonstrating some knowledge but with clear, important or numerous omissions, and lacking much breadth (scope of the material in question) or depth (e.g. citing literature).
10 (50%)	a weakly satisfactory answer, demonstrating some knowledge but with a few omissions and lacking much breadth or depth.
11 (55%)	a satisfactory answer demonstrating knowledge but lacking breadth and depth.
12 (60%)	a clearly satisfactory answer, demonstrating knowledge with some awareness of the scope of the issues in question, including citation of relevant sources. Arguments are sustained and presented within a logical framework.

- 13 (65%) a good answer, substantially complete and correct, showing breadth and depth but not quite first class, e.g. lacking citation of some essential literature, or with one or two minor errors. Arguments are well supported by evidence.
- 14 (70%) **Threshold for a Distinction.** A very good answer deemed equivalent to a first within the context of the Preliminary Examination. Substantially complete and correct, arguments are well supported by evidence and citation of relevant sources, demonstrating critical thinking, knowledge of literature, and with no substantial errors.
- 15 (75%) a very good answer deemed equivalent to a first within the context of the Preliminary Examination. E.g. substantially complete and correct, demonstrating knowledge of literature, and featuring no errors.
- 16 (80%) an excellent answer, complete and correct and e.g. demonstrating novel thinking and/or showing knowledge of the history of thought on the subject and/or excellent critical synthesis.
- 17 (85%) an excellent answer, complete and correct and e.g. demonstrating novel thinking and/or showing knowledge of the history of thought on the subject and/or excellent and deep critical synthesis.
- 18 (90%) an exceptionally good answer, showing knowledge of the subject beyond that expected for a first-year student, as above and showing originality leading to publishable or near publishable quality.
- 19 (95%) a truly exceptional piece of work of publishable quality, showing evidence of novel thought and/or originality of approach, deep and critical analysis.
- 20 (100%) a perfect answer (very rare).

The final mark for the paper (Papers 1 and 2) is the total of the marks awarded for the Short Answers section (out of a possible 40) and for the Essay Questions section (out of a possible 60), giving a final total mark out of 100.

Papers 3 and 4

Each of these papers requires four answers to be attempted. Each answer is marked out of a possible maximum of 25 marks, giving a total for each paper of a possible 100 marks. The marking scheme for these papers is as follows. The equivalent % score for each mark are indicated and markers are expected to use the indicative descriptions in making their judgments on which mark to award.

The criteria should be viewed in a cumulative manner, and the majority of positive criteria within a mark band (and those below it) should be satisfied in order for a mark in that band to be awarded.

Markers may allocate a score that falls between the stated bands (e.g. 16.5 marks, equivalent to 66%) if the work fulfils some but not all of the criteria for the mark band above.

- 0 (0%) no answer
- 1-2 (4-8%) barely an answer
- 3 (12%) a very poor answer with little of relevance in the answer and/or wrong
- 4 (16%) very poor answer, with perhaps one relevant point mentioned
- 5 (20%) a poor answer, with little relevance, and typically with substantial errors
- 6 (24%) a poor answer, but showing some knowledge and relevant facts, although possibly with substantial errors
- 7 (28%) an unsatisfactory answer, but showing some knowledge and containing some relevant material but lacking detail or with substantial errors
- 8 (32%) an unsatisfactory answer, but showing some knowledge and containing relevant material but lacking detail or with errors
- 9 (36%) a weak answer, not judged worthy to have passed, but close.
- 10 (40%) **Threshold for a Pass.** A just adequate answer, showing some knowledge but with several omissions, lacking detail and/or carrying much superfluous material, and/or some errors.
- 11 (44%) an adequate answer, demonstrating some knowledge but with clear, important or numerous omissions, and lacking much breadth (scope of the material in question) or depth (e.g. citing literature).
- 12 (48%) a better than adequate answer, demonstrating some knowledge but with some omissions, and lacking much breadth (scope of the material in question) or depth (e.g. citing literature).
- 13 (52%) a weakly satisfactory answer, demonstrating some knowledge but with a few omissions and lacking much breadth or depth.
- 14 (56%) a satisfactory answer demonstrating knowledge but lacking breadth and depth.
- 15 (60%) a clearly satisfactory answer, demonstrating knowledge with some awareness of the scope of the issues in question, including citation of relevant sources. Arguments are sustained and presented within a logical framework.
- 16 (64%) a good answer, substantially complete and correct, showing breadth and depth but not quite first class, e.g. lacking citation of some essential literature, or with one or two minor errors. Arguments are well supported by evidence.
- 17 (68%) a good to very good answer bordering first class, substantially complete and correct, showing breadth and depth but not quite first

class, e.g. lacking citation of some essential literature, or with one or two minor errors. Arguments are well supported by evidence.

17.5 (70%) **Threshold for a Distinction.**

18 (72%) a very good answer deemed equivalent to a first within the context of the Preliminary Examination. Substantially complete and correct, Arguments are well supported by evidence and citation of relevant sources, demonstrating critical thinking, knowledge of literature, and with no substantial errors.

19 (76%) a very good answer deemed equivalent to a first within the context of the Preliminary Examination. E.g. substantially complete and correct, demonstrating knowledge of literature, and featuring no errors.

20 (80%) an excellent answer, complete and correct and e.g. demonstrating novel thinking and/or showing knowledge of the history of thought on the subject and/or excellent critical synthesis.

23 (92%) an exceptionally good answer, showing knowledge of the subject beyond that expected for a first-year student, as above and showing originality leading to publishable or near publishable quality.

24 (96%) a truly exceptional piece of work of publishable quality, showing evidence of novel thought and/or originality of approach, deep and critical analysis.

25 (100%) a perfect answer (very rare)

Paper 5

Candidates must attempt two questions, each of which is marked out of 50, giving a possible total of 100 marks for the paper. Marks for each part of each question are indicated in square brackets after each part of each question on the question paper and are awarded for correct working and numerical results.

Pass Marks and Distinctions

The pass mark for each paper is 40.

Distinctions are awarded to those candidates who, at one and the same examination, have achieved:

- a) a mean mark of 70 or above **and**
- b) at least 70 on two papers **and**
- c) not less than 55 on the remaining paper(s)

Scripts are single-marked in the Preliminary Examination unless the Chairman of Examiners decides otherwise for particular candidates, but are marked by two examiners in subsequent examinations.

Candidates who fail paper(s) in Prelims

Candidates must pass all five papers in Prelims to continue into the second year of the Human Sciences degree. Candidates who fail one or two papers may resit just the paper(s) failed. A candidate who fails three or more papers must retake all five papers. Resits are usually held in early September and scripts are marked and results published on Student Self Service within two weeks of the exam.

Examiners' Reports and Past Papers

Examiners' reports can be found on Canvas at
<https://canvas.ox.ac.uk/courses/296066>

Past Papers can be found on SOLO at <https://solo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/>

6. What happens after Prelims?

Compulsory Papers

After passing your Preliminary examinations you will enter the Honour School. As an Honour School student you will prepare to be examined on five compulsory papers and two optional papers. You will also be required to submit a dissertation which carries the same weight as a single paper. The five compulsory papers are:

- Behaviour and its evolution
- Human genetics and evolution
- Human ecology
- Demography and population
- Anthropological analysis and Interpretation OR Sociological theory

The Human Ecology paper is examined by an extended essay written in Trinity Term of the second year and a presentation in Michaelmas Term of the third year. The remaining papers are examined by written exams in Trinity Term of the third year.

Options Papers

In Hilary Term of your second year you will be asked to choose two options. The range of options varies from year to year.

For your guidance the optional subjects on offer to students in 2025-26 were

- Anthropological Analysis and Interpretation (if not taken as paper 5)
- Anthropology of a Selected Region
- The Anthropology of Buddhism
- Anthropology of Mental Illness and Healing
- Biological Conservation
- Ethnobotany: Plant, People and Perspectives
- Gender Theories and Realities: Cross-Cultural Perspectives
- General Linguistics
- Geographies of Migration
- Health and Disease
- Physical and Forensic Anthropology: the Analysis of Human Skeletal Remains
- Quantitative Methods
- Social Policy
- Sociological Theory (if not taken as paper 5)
- A range of Psychology options

Dissertation (Paper 6)

Later in your second year there will be a talk to help you choose a topic for your dissertation. You will be asked to submit a synopsis for this by the start of Week 1 of Trinity Term of your second year.

We hope you enjoy the course.