SEXUAL CONFLICT

“Locked together by their need for partners in sexual reproduction, the sexes undergo an antagonistic dance to the music of time.”

“The ‘evolutionary dance’ that has been used as a metaphor to describe the process of sexually antagonistic coadaptation may be better regarded not simply as a couple moving across a dance floor, but as a couple who leave a trail of destruction that they must negotiate as they move around.”
—Tregenza et al. (2006)

Instructor: Ryne A. Palombit
001 Biological Sciences Bldg, Douglass Campus
Phone: 932-5214
rpalombit@anthropology.rutgers.edu
http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~palombit/

Office Hours: Monday 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm or by appointment

Class Meeting Times: Thursday, 2:15-5:15pm


Sakai Website: 16:070:568:01 S09

Requirements: Participation in Seminar Discussions (30%)
(includes moderating, discussion, summarizing)
Positions Papers (each worth 10%, totaling 20%)
Presentation (15%)
Paper (35%)

GOAL OF SEMINAR
Our goal is to reach some conclusions about the current state of theory and data concerning “Sexual Conflict.” Sexual conflict has attracted rapidly increasing attention from behavioral ecologists over the last decade or so, such that studies of it have now come to outnumber investigations of the “conventional” forms of sexual selection. Indeed, although it is essentially a source of intersexual selection, sexual conflict is increasingly recognized as a “third form” of sexual selection, in addition to
those two traditional forms: intrasexual competition (usually males) and mate choice (usually females).

As is true with any new and quickly growing theoretical field, there is considerable debate over the definitions, assumptions, and models of sexual conflict. Most of this research has focused on invertebrates—particularly insects—and some select vertebrates such as fish, birds, and an occasional mammal. In spite of an early landmark paper, research on sexual conflict in primates has not progressed as dramatically.

We recognize two general forms of sexual conflict as sexually divergent optima for either: (1) alleles determining a specific trait—*intralocus* conflict—as in the evolution of sexual dimorphism; or (2) the outcome of male-female interactions—*interlocus* conflict. This course is mainly about interlocus conflict (the former is discussed more in the seminar *Sex Differences and Sexual Selection in Primates*).

**MODERATING**

Once or twice during the semester you’ll moderate discussion. This means leading the discussion by offering your critical evaluations of the readings. This does not mean simply rephrasing the content of the papers. Rather, take a position on the work and present it. Foster debate by presenting opposing views on a subject.

One of your responsibilities as moderator is to do a (computer) search of the literature on the topic you’re moderating and make recommendations regarding papers we should read in class. The question basically is: are there other papers of enough importance to recommend we drop the currently assigned reading (see below) and replace it? Your recommendations don’t have to be necessarily based on in-depth analysis of each paper. Rather, you should be able to make a preliminary evaluation based on a quick reading of it.

So, *two weeks* before your moderating date, you should hand in to me (or email to me) a list of 3-5 papers you’ve run across that you think are relevant for the discussion. Then, for each one, explain *in a few sentences* why you recommend it or don’t recommend it for as a reading for the seminar.

**RAPPORTEUR**

Each meeting will have one person who will act as rapporteur, charged with summarizing the important points of the discussion that day. This should generally be only one page (single-spaced). Rapporteurs should link ideas with the people who offered them, and should identify and highlight in their reports the following: (1) the 3 most important ideas presented (and explain why); (2) the best quote of the day (linked to the person who generated it). Email the summary to me within 24 hrs of the meeting. After checking it, I’ll then put it on the Sakai site.

**POSITION PAPERS**

A couple times during the semester you will write a “position paper.” These are brief and cogent articulations of your position and the support for it. Position papers on a topic will be photocopied and distributed to everyone. We will read the papers and then discuss them in the next meeting. You are not graded on the position you take. What is required for full credit is a serious effort to state a convincing position.

These papers are somewhat similar to the “Open Peer Commentary” exemplified by journals such as *The Behavioral and Brain Sciences*. Each position paper should not exceed 1500 words. Due date and topic TBA later in semester. Remember: take a position and convince the reader of it.

**EMAIL**:

On the due dates, please email your position paper to me at rpalombit@anthropology.rutgers.edu. *Please do not email participants in the course directly.* Around 5pm on the due date, I will email all position papers to everyone. Make sure yours reaches me before then!
**PAPER**

You will write a paper on a topic of your choosing (related to sexual conflict). There are many possible topics to write about due to the large number of debates about sexual conflict and the immense diversity of outcomes of the process of sexual conflict.

NOTE: You can write the paper either as a standard review or as a (mock) research grant proposal.

We will set aside some class periods for you to present a working version of your ideas for your paper in class. This will give you a chance to get feedback from colleagues before you hand in the paper. You’ll assign some readings and then basically share your information and conclusions to date. The paper is due on at the end of the semester in time for me to grade before grade submission (date TBA).

**Schedule of Meetings and Provisional Reading List**

*Note: Readings are suggested only: they may be changed the week before meeting based on my consultations with the moderator for that session.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 22</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Organizational meeting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Arnqvist, G. & Rowe, L. 2005. Sexual Conflict, Princeton University Press, Princeton. [Chapter 1] Recommended by not required (we might not have time to discuss, but this paper is among the original treatments of the "arms race" idea underlying this entire enterprise):  
Not assigned by there for reference:  
### Feb. 19
**Coercion as male “display”**


---

### Feb. 26
**Postcopulatory, pre-zygotic Sexual Conflict**


*Something on human genital modifications*

---

### Mar. 5
**Female Counter-Strategies**


---

### Mar. 12
**Sexual Conflict Over Parental Investment**


---

### Mar. 19
**Spring Break**

-  

---

### Mar. 26
**Sexual Conflict: Speciation & Extinction**


---

### Apr. 2
**Female coercion of males (%)**


---

### Apr. 9
**Student**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Presentations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 16</td>
<td>Student Presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 23</td>
<td>Student Presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 30</td>
<td>OPEN Position Papers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>