

Evolution of Human Diet

'Erst kommt das Fressen, dann kommt die Moral.'
Die Driegroschenoper (1928)

Diet is one of the central occupations of human existence, and examining how this changed over time has implications for how we view contemporary questions on human diet and nutrition, how our hominin ancestors lived and evolved, and how, and under what conditions, mankind spread across the globe. The guidebook for this course, *Evolution of the Human Diet*, gathers together researchers from fields who share this: a desire to know and understand the evolution and ecology of ourselves, our ancestors, and our primate relatives. Nutritional analysis and its bearing on evolutionary medicine, models of hominin diets based on extant primate diets, archaeological investigations of subsistence, and reconstructions of diets based on hominin fossils, shall be examined and discussed.

Instructor

Hylke de Jong

Office hours: by appointment

Room: BIO 204B

Class meetings

Monday and Thursday: 9.15-10.35

Materials

In addition to the resources available on Sakai, the following book is required:

Evolution of the Human Diet: The Known, the Unknown, and the Unknowable (2007): Peter S. Ungar (ed), Oxford University Press, Oxford, etc.

Learning goals

- Identify theoretical issues with respect to hominin and human diets.
- Identify key technical issues in dietary reconstruction.
- Achieve familiarity with current scientific literature on the evolution of hominin diets.
- Apply the evolutionary perspective to medical questions such as diabetes and obesity.
- Develop a proposal for significant research on an important question pertaining to hominin dietary evolution.

Grading

Grading will be based on participation in class discussion (20%), reviews of papers (30%), paper summaries (10%), a term paper in the style of a grant proposal (30%) and a poster presentation (10%).

Review papers, summaries, and class discussion

Each class will begin with the sharing of reviews of a paper selected by one of your colleagues and announced at the end of the previous class meeting. These reviews should highlight strengths and weaknesses of the paper and will be in the style of reviews of a submitted manuscript.

The main part of each class will be discussion of papers from "Evolution of the Human Diet" and the selected, reviewed paper.

The class will end with a brief summary of the paper chosen for review in the next class. This summary will be in the style of a cover letter to a journal.

Schedule

TBA