



## EVOLVING PERSPECTIVES

Biology course offered for non-science majors

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In biology professor Peter Goldman's class next semester, students will get the chance to study and understand the history of our species on a scientific level.

Goldman will teach a biology course called "Homo sapiens: A Biological Perspective" next semester that will satisfy the life science LSP mode of inquiry.

This course primarily is about evolutionary history and the processes responsible for historical changes within our own species. Goldman said it is an introductory evolutionary biology course that will involve aspects of genetics, ecology and geology. This course recently was added so junior and senior non-science majors would have an opportunity to learn about evolution in a way that is geared toward them.

"In the liberal studies, one aspect of that — an important aspect — is to have students who are not trained to be scientists to understand the power and limits of scientific investigations," Goldman said.

With preference given to non-science majors, Goldman said he thought it would be an interesting new endeavor for him and an opportunity to interact with older non-science majors who might not have a clear understanding of evolution.

Goldman said he thinks evolution is a topic a lot of students are not comfortable with. He said he thinks evolution is not taught effectively in high schools or

higher education, so students who take the course might be lacking information.

Goldman said he hopes this course will defuse any controversy in students' minds about whether evolution has taken place. He also said he hopes the students taking this course will leave with a better understanding about this subject.

"Well, I hope to get out of it a far better understanding of how science works, and what draws us to this way of satisfying our curiosity," Goldman said.

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-Biology professor Peter Goldman

This fall marks the second time this course has been available at Truman. Goldman said when it was offered for the first time last spring, he was able to learn a lot about how to keep the interest of the students because students either loved the experience or didn't seem to enjoy it at all. He said he plans to structure it differently this time and change the course because he learned a lot from the first time he taught it.

There is no lab offered with this course. Instead, there are discussion sessions during which students will tackle projects that

actually come up in scientific investigations. Goldman said students will try to make sense of the kinds of investigations evolutionary biologists perform. He said students will also look at the intellectual problems that arise when trying to work out life's long history and processes involved in shaping that history.

"I hope it's an intellectual adventure for people," Goldman said. "It is for me."

The textbook for this course is Carl Zimmer's "The Tangled Bank: An Introduction to Evolution," an introductory evolutionary biology text for non-science major college students. Goldman said "The Tangled Bank" is not specifically focused on the evolution of Homo sapiens, but it does present a lot of information about our evolutionary past and present.

Junior anthropology major Andrew Springmann took the course last spring. Springmann said coming from a social science background, he didn't know much about the process of evolution, but this course helped him learn about the mechanics of evolution and gain a deeper understanding of it. Springmann said his interest in paleoanthropology, a type of anthropology that deals with early human fossils, is what made him interested in taking the course, and he said it was a good introduction for someone outside of the discipline.

"I would definitely recommend the course to anyone that's coming from a non-biological background who wants to learn more about evolution in our own species and in other species as well," Springmann said.