

The Anthropology of War

ANTH 4307

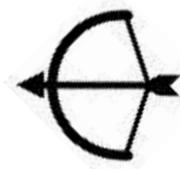


Anthropology—Spring 2026

Sul Ross State University

Lecture: MW 3:30 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.

Room: (Lawerence Hall) LH 200



Course Instructor: Dr. Bryon Schroeder

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Office Hours: W 2-3:00 p.m.

Course Description:

This course covers the origins of war and violence in the genus Homo. We will use multiple subdisciplines of anthropology to explore the origins and perpetuation of violent conflict: Archaeology allows us to examine the deep time associated with indicators of violence around the globe. Primatology offers multiple analogs of violence from other social primates. Finally, cultural anthropology provides a cross-cultural perspective on the role of violence in contemporary groups. We will use these studies to examine the most prominent questions about the potential for peace and the inherent role of violence in our species.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

- 1.) The students will be able to describe and understand the longevity of conflict and war in human groups.
- 2.) The students will understand the origins of conflict, violence, and the longevity of warfare and the human and cultural decisions that lead to each. They will have a basic understanding of why human groups decide to engage in conflict or do not, along with arguments for the innateness of violence in our species.
- 3.) The students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of conflict and violence in our closest primate relatives and what their conflict says about our own. This will include understanding the evolutionary arguments attributed to violence.

Goals and Objectives:

This course seeks to familiarize students with the study of conflict and warfare, examining their historical development and contemporary objectives in warfare research. Although warfare is a troubling topic, it is an essential aspect of human history. Anthropology provides a unique lens through which we can explore humanity at all times and locations, a perspective that will be fundamental to this class and our understanding of why humans kill.

Texts:

Kim, Nam C., and Marc Kissel

2018 *Emergent Warfare in our Evolutionary Past*. Routledge Press, New York.

Keeley, Lawerence H.,

1996 *War Before Civilizations the Myth of the Peaceful Savage*. Oxford University Press, New York.

Any additional readings will be assigned on the Blackboard webpage for this class, and students will be instructed on how to access this material.

Assignments & Grades

Assignments	Date	Points	% of Grade
Tests	(See below)	400	60.6%
In-Class Participation	Show up and participate to get points	(10 weekly points) 260 total [excludes test days]	39.4%
660 total points			100.00

Assignment Description:

Tests: It is essential to convey your understanding of the material. I want to gauge what you know, so we will have an oral portion of the exam and a written take-home.

In-Class Participation: This is a reading-based class, so reading and participation are required. You will get points for attending class and for discussing the material. Come Prepared.

Tests (Take Home)
Test 1: February 11 th
Test 2: March 4 th
Test 3: April 6th
Test 4: May Finals Week TBA

Grades:

Percentage	Points	Letter Grade	GPA Value
100 – 90	660 - 593	A	4.0
89 – 80	592 - 528	B	3.0
79 – 70	527 - 462	C	2.0
69 – 60	461 - 395	D	1.0
59 and below	395 and below	F	0.0

Library Information:

The Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library and Archives of the Big Bend in Alpine offers FREE resources and services to the entire SRSU community. Access and borrow books, articles, and more by visiting the library's website, library.sulross.edu. Off-campus access requires logging in with your Lobold and password. Librarians are a tremendous resource for your coursework and can be reached in person, by email (srsulibrary@sulross.edu), or phone (432-837-8123). No matter where you are based, public libraries and many academic and special libraries welcome the general public into their spaces for study. SRSU TexShare Cardholders can access additional services and resources at various libraries across Texas. Learn more about the TexShare program by visiting library.sulross.edu/texshare or ask a librarian by emailing srsulibrary@sulross.edu.

Mike Fernandez, SRSU Librarian, is based in Eagle Pass (Building D-129) to offer specialized library services to students, faculty, and staff. Use free services such as InterLibrary Loan, ScanIt, and Direct Mail to get materials delivered at home or via email.

Academic Dishonesty:

Students in this class are expected to demonstrate scholarly behavior and academic honesty in the use of intellectual property. Students should submit work that is their own and avoid the temptation to engage in behaviors that violate academic integrity, such as turning in work as original that was used in whole or part for another course and/or professor; turning in another person's work as one's own; copying from professional works or internet sites without citation; collaborating on a course assignment, examination, or quiz when collaboration is forbidden. Students should also avoid using open AI sources unless permission is expressly given for an assignment or course. **Use the AI to think with you, not for you!** Violations of academic integrity can result in failing assignments, failing a class, and/or more serious university consequences. These behaviors also erode the value of college degrees and higher education overall.

Classroom Climate of Respect:

Importantly, this class will foster free expression, critical investigation, and the open discussion of ideas. This means that all of us must help create and sustain an atmosphere of tolerance, civility, and respect for the viewpoints of others. Similarly, we must all learn how to probe, oppose and disagree without resorting to tactics of intimidation, harassment, or personal attack. No one is entitled to harass, belittle, or discriminate against another on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, age, gender, national origin, or sexual preference. Still, we will not be silenced by the difficulty of discussing politically sensitive issues.

Student Responsibilities Statement

All full-time and part-time students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the [Student Handbook](#) and the [Undergraduate & Graduate Catalog](#) and for abiding by the [University rules and regulations](#). Additionally, students are responsible for checking their Sul Ross email as an official form of communication from the university. Every student is expected to obey all federal, state and local laws and is expected to familiarize themselves with the requirements of such laws.

ADA Compliance:

SRSU Accessibility Services. Sul Ross State University (SRSU) is committed to equal access in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. It is SRSU policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request each semester for each class. Students seeking accessibility/accommodations services must contact Mrs. Mary Schwartze Grisham, LPC, SRSU's Accessibility Services Director or Ronnie Harris, LPC, Counselor, at 432-837-8203 or email mschwartze@sulross.edu or ronnie.harris@sulross.edu. RGC students can also contact Alejandra Valdez, at 830-758-5006 or email alejandra.valdez@sulross.edu. Our office is located on the first floor of Ferguson Hall, room 112, and our mailing address is P.O. Box C122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas, 79832.

Tentative Class Schedule Spring 2026

Week 1 1/14	Class 1: Syllabus	Reading None
Week 2 1/19 – 1/21	No Class Class 2: The Emergence of Warfare	Reading Article: Kissel and Kim 2018
Week 3 1/26 – 1/28	Class 4: Peering into the Abyss Class 5: Dropping into the Rabbit Hole	Reading Chapter 1-2: Kim and Kissel
Week 4 2/2 – 2/4	Class 6: Violence in the Ancient Past Class 7: The Ice Age World	Reading Chapter 3-4: Kim and Kissel
Week 5 2/9 – 2/11	Class 8: Insights from Genomic Research Class 9: Test 1	Reading Chapter 5: Kim and Kissel
Week 6 2/16 – 2/18	Class 10: The Onset of Emergent Warfare Class 11: The Durability of Peace	Reading Chapter 6-7: Kim and Kissel
Week 7 2/23 – 2/25	Class 12: Ethnographic examples of peace Class 13: Examples of Conflict Reduction.	Reading Douglas Fry Chapters will be posted to Blackboard
Week 8	Class 14: There and Back Again	Reading
Midterm 3/2 – 3/4	Class 15: Test 2	Chapter 8: Kim and Kissel
Week 9 3/9 – 3/11	Spring Break	Reading None.
Week 10 3/16 – 3/18	Class 16: The Dogs of War/Pacified Past Class 17: Tactics and Weapons	Reading Chapter 1 – 3: Kelley
Week 11 3/23 – 3/25	Class 18: Forms of Combat Class 19: Casualties of War	Reading Chapter 4 – 6: Kelley
Week 12 3/30 – 4/1	Class 20: Profits and Losses Class 21: The Contexts for War	Reading Chapter 7-9: Kelley
Week 13 4/6 – 4/8	Class 22: Test 3 Class 23: Architecture of Conflict	Reading Kelley, Fontana, and Quick 2018
Week 14 4/13 – 4/15	Class 24: Past Conflict in the Southwest Class 25: Past Conflict in the Midwest	Reading TBA
Week 15 4/20 – 4/22	Class 26: Conflict in the Missouri Trench Class 27: Conflict in the North	Reading TBA
Week 16 4/27 – 4/29	Class 28: Iconography of Conflict Class 29: End of Class Discussion/Review	Reading TBA
Final	TBA	
*Grades are due Monday, May 11th @ noon		