What makes us human?
The human story is revealed not only in our ideas and cultural behaviors, but also in our bodies and our genes. This class will introduce you to the scientific quest for human origins. We can make inferences about human evolution by comparing ourselves to our close living relatives (primates), but we can only really know how we became the unique species we are today by looking at ancient evidence, and tracing our bio-cultural evolution deep into prehistoric times.

Evolutionary Anthropology is an inter-disciplinary science that links information from many different sources. Throughout the semester we will examine examples of how researchers evaluate different kinds of scientific evidence from the present and the past, and how scientific hypotheses about human evolution can be tested with data from a variety of sources.

So, looking for clues to human origins, A-Z, we'll:

- argue about artifacts
- be brainy bipeds
- cheer chimpanzees
- dabble in Darwin, dexterity, DNA and diversity
- evaluate ethics
- face-time fossils
- glorify gorillas
- help hominins
- investigate Ice Ages
- judge
- K-select and K/Ar
- like the Leakeys
- meet mysterious "missing links"
- narrate Neanderthals
- organize our origins
- ponder prehistoric primates
- question
- render rocks
- shatter scientific stereotypes
- transform troglodytes
- unveil underground
- verify Venuses
- wonder wistfully
- x-chromosome
- y and y-not?
- zing Zinjanthropus

...And more!

Ultimately our goal is to help you appreciate how a knowledge of the deep human past is relevant to your own life, whether as a student at IU today, or as a future parent, medical patient, consumer…. or IT professional.

Lectures will include digital media presentations (using PREZI) and discussions using interactive student response systems (clickers) to model problem-solving and help students understand difficult concepts. Weekly labs and discussions will give students the chance to study different types of evidence for themselves (e.g., casts of fossils, artifacts) and to learn about the strengths and weaknesses of each approach to interpreting our past. Grades will be based on lecture participation, weekly take-home quizzes (administered online), weekly lab exercises, and three short essay assignments / projects.

Honors students will have a separate discussion/lab section with Professor Sept, do slightly different readings than the other students, and do a special project that relates to our class activities.

Professor Sept is an award-winning teacher who specializes in the archaeology of human origins in Africa, has studied the archaeology of wild chimpanzees, and is particularly interested in paleo-diet.

Class carries N&M Distribution & Gen Ed Credit