

MOLLOY UNIVERSITY
School of Education and Human Services
Department of Teacher Education

EDU 5900-26- Before There Was Man **(3 credits)**

Summer 2026

Instructor: William Behrens

Email: wbehrens@freeportschools.org

Office hours: Upon request

Course Description:

This course is an exploration of human evolution and cultural development, tracing the origins of humanity from our primate ancestors to the rise of early civilizations. Through archaeological and fossil evidence, students will explore major developments in prehistory, including the earliest evidence for culture, human migration and adaptation, the development of technology, and the emergence of agriculture and complex societies. This course is open to all grade and content areas.

***This course may be used as the first of three courses towards a certificate in XXX**

Shared Vision:

The Molloy University Teacher Education faculty has derived its vision for the exemplary teacher from the University's mission statement, the four pillars of the Dominican tradition, comments and input from the Professional Education Unit's Advisory Board and degree candidates as well as numerous faculty discussions rooted in the department's knowledge base which undergirds the initial and advanced programs' curriculum, pedagogy, and values.

The teaching professionals who complete Molloy's teacher preparation programs are distinguished by their ability to exemplify and promote core values in their own teaching. These values include:

- Belief that all children can learn
- Learner-centered and value-centered curriculum and pedagogy
- Ethics and spirituality

- Intellectual curiosity
- Independence and risk taking, while promoting collective identity and responsibility
- Diversity, multiculturalism and pluralism, including divergent thinking
- Passion for teaching
- Commitment to students and their communities
- Civic responsibility through the promotion of social justice and interdependence
- Commitment to democracy

Course Objectives:

1. Describe the major stages of human evolution and identify key hominin species.
2. Explain how archaeological evidence is used to reconstruct the behavior and lifeways of prehistoric populations.
3. Evaluate competing theories about the past using critical thinking skills.
4. Summarize the major developments in human prehistory, such as the origins of bipedalism, language, and domestication.

Course Format:

This course will be offered online through Canvas, Molloy's learning management system, and can be done entirely asynchronously or can be taken as a hybrid option. Hybrid options will meet 1 full day in person of instruction on the last day of the course. Students will select their format on the 1st day. The course will open two days before the start date and close one week after the last day of class. This section is offered in the Summer of 2026, dates TBD. There will be daily activities and discussions that must be completed by the due date listed. 1-2 weeks additional time to complete the final project as needed.

Required Readings, Videos, and Other Materials:

All materials will be provided throughout the course.

Course Requirements and Evaluation:

- **Discussion # 1: Introductions** (5pts)
- **Module 1: Foundations of Human Origins** (7pts)
 - Introduction to anthropology and its four subfields: archaeology, biological, cultural, and linguistic.
 - Basic methods and theories of archaeology and paleoanthropology.
 - Timeline of prehistory and geological periods.
- **Module 2: Our Primate Relatives** (7pts)
 - Overview of primate biology and behavior.
 - The last common ancestor between humans and chimpanzees.
 - An introduction to genetics and evolutionary theory.
- **Module 3: The Emergence of Early Hominins** (7pts)
 - Theories and fossil evidence for the origins of bipedalism.
 - Key species like *Australopithecus afarensis* ("Lucy") and the Laetoli footprints.

- **Module 4: The Emergence of Early Homo Species (7pts)**
 - The emergence of the genus *Homo* and the first tool technology (Oldowan industry).
 - Exploration of *Homo habilis* and *Homo erectus*.
 - The controlled use of fire and migration out of Africa.
- **Module 5: Our First Glimpse of Modern Humans: *Homo sapiens* (7pts)**
 - The world of the Neanderthals and their tool traditions (Mousterian industry).
 - Debates over the relationship between Neanderthals and modern humans.
- **Module 6: The Rise of *Homo sapiens* (7pts)**
 - The "Out of Africa" and multiregional models of human dispersal.
 - Evidence for modern human behavior, including art, symbolism, and complex tools.
 - Global human migration and the people of the world.
- **Discussion # 2: Built to Last (5pts)**
- **Module 7: The Stone Age (7pts)**
 - Chronology of the Paleolithic, Mesolithic, and Neolithic periods.
 - Case studies of prehistoric hunter-gatherer societies.
 - Interpretation of cave art and other symbolic artifacts.
- **Module 8: The Agricultural Revolution (7pts)**
 - The origins and consequences of animal and plant domestication.
 - Major centers of domestication worldwide.
 - The transition from nomadic foraging to settled village life
- **Module 9: The Rise of Complex Societies (7pts)**
 - The development of social stratification, political systems, and writing.
 - Case studies of early civilizations in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Indus Valley.
- **Module 10: The Legacy of Prehistory (7pts)**
 - How lessons from ancient societies inform our understanding of modern challenges.
 - The impact of past human activity on the environment.
- **Discussion # 3: Final Thoughts (5pts)**
- **Final Project: Lesson Plan Activity (15pts)**

Molloy University and School of Education and Human Services Policies and Supports:

Expectations of Academic Integrity for All Students

[Honor Pledge and Academic Honesty Policy](#)

Course Withdrawals

View [Withdrawal Policy](#) for potential financial implications

View [the Academic Calendar](#) and/or the course syllabus for the last day to withdraw dates

Incompletes

Incompletes Policy

Health and Wellness

[Student Health Services](#)

[Student Counseling Center \(SCC\)](#)

Center for Access and Disability (Access)

[Center for Access and Disability](#)

Technical Support

[Student Account, Technology and Canvas](#)

Ally for Canvas

[Supportive Tools and Resources/ Ally](#)

Use of Proctorio for Exams/Quizzes (if applicable)

[Proctorio Resources for Students](#)

Email Accounts

Students are to utilize their Molloy e-mail account or via Canvas when communicating throughout the semester. Those who use a non-Molloy account may miss important messages. Students are responsible for responding to all methods of communication in a timely fashion relating to this course. Instructors will respond to emails from students within 24 hours. When/ if you email the instructor(s), please indicate what course you are in with the course number and section.

APA Manuscript Style

All manuscripts in the field of education are written in the style format of the American Psychological Association. Candidates in the Graduate Education Programs are required to purchase the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (7th ed.). (2010). American Psychological Association.

All papers written in every course must adhere to the manuscript prescriptions defined in this manual.

