

**Human Evolution and Prehistory**  
*Chautauqua Special Studies course*

**Week 1**

**2:00-3:00 pm**

**Hultquist 101**

**Instructor:** Dr. Bridget Alex  
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**Course description:** *This seminar will review the human story, from our beginnings through the modern era, from the perspectives of human evolutionary biology and archaeology. We'll discuss the evolution of defining features of our species, including bipedalism, tool use, fire, language, art and religion. We will also discuss extinct humans, such as Neanderthals, and recent discoveries from DNA. The instructor will share new research from her archaeological digs in the Middle East and Eastern Europe.*

**Schedule of topics:**

**Monday Introduction – Humans as primates**

- How do humans differ from other primates?
- Who was our last common ancestor with chimpanzees?
- Time focus: 8 million years ago

**Tuesday Lucy and other early hominins**

- Becoming bipedal – start of the hominin lineage
- Earliest hominins: *Sahelanthropus*, *Orrorin*, *Ardipithecus*
- Lucy and the Australopiths
- What is a species?
- Time focus: 8 – 2 million years

**Wednesday Big brained hunter-gatherers**

- *Homo erectus* – bigger brains, modern bodies
- Tools, hunting, and fire use
- Time focus: 2 million – 500,000

**Thursday Modern humans, Neanderthals, and more**

- *Homo sapiens*, Neanderthals, and Denisovans
- DNA evidence for interbreeding between different humans
- *Homo floresiensis*, *Homo naledi*, and other archaic types
- Time focus: 800,000 – 40,000 years ago

**Friday Settling the globe & settling down**

- Modern human colonization of Australia, Americas, and islands
- When and how did language evolve?
- Agriculture as an irreversible accident

- Domestication: why aren't foxes man's best friend?
- Recent evolution and modern human variation
- Time focus: 50,000 - present