

9.20 MIT
Classes #24: Sociobiology as Science
Friday Nov 4, 2005

Homework assignment:

Specify in writing two possible topics for your project paper. Cite at least two sources. If you want to write about human ethology or some other aspect of human behavior, you must include material about other primate species for comparison. If you want to write about one particular species, try to narrow the topic to certain aspects of behavior.

Reading:

- John Alcock, *The Triumph of Sociobiology* (Oxford 2001), ch 4-5, pp 57-91

Study questions: Alcock ch 4-5

1. What could cause a non-adaptive change in the evolution of social behavior? (p 60-61)
2. Explain why Alcock spends so much time (space) on discussion of a short preliminary report by David Barash on mountain bluebirds. (See pp 65-71)
3. How is the comparative method used by adaptationists (sociobiologists) to test hypotheses about adaptive social behavior? (p 72-73)
4. What is wrong with the arguments presented by Robert Ardrey in his book, *The Territorial Imperative* ?
5. "Humans and chimps are, after all, the only species among the 4000 species of mammals in which male relatives form groups to raid other groups while living in and defending the area of their birth." (p 76) Where would you look for possible exceptions to this claim?
6. See Appendix, ch 4: Q2.
7. See Appendix, ch 5: Q2.
8. See Appendix, ch 5: Q1, first question. (The other questions are also interesting.)