

AAP 315 – Human evolution and the hominid fossil record

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General information and module structure

This module follows a structure similar to others involved in the CILASS project in that a one-hour lecture is to be followed by a one-hour period of group student activity related to major pieces of assessment (although it is yet to be decided whether these components will both take place on the same day or on different days). Each class and almost every piece of assessment has an IBL component and therefore AAP 315 provides a good example for members of staff who wish to have substantial and continuous IBL components running throughout a module, but who also wish to retain a standard lecture format for the content delivery.

IBL tasks and assessment

1. Weekly assessments

Each week, students will be required to write and submit (through WebCT) a short 200-300 word response to questions, popular articles or webpages which deal with issues raised in the lectures. In writing a personal response, students are required to achieve a deeper understanding of the material, rather than just memorising and reproducing content. It also requires them to engage in depth with the full content of the module.

2. Major assignments with IBL components

Fossil Assessment Report

This exercise – which will take place during the second hour of various weeks' lessons – 'models the process of research' insofar as information about a particular fossil is drip-fed to the students over a period of four weeks. This will be done by giving the students an original article in the first week announcing a new find, but only providing a basic description. In the subsequent weeks, further information will be given in the form of 'made-up' research reports which would fill in the details, and it is also intended to stimulate a change in the interpretation of the original report. Papers that refute some aspects of the interpretation may also be included. Students will thereby be forced to alter and refine their interpretations over time which allows them experience of the way a 'real' fossil assessment would occur as well as encouraging independent inquiry and problem solving. Students will then write a report, based on additional reading, providing a full morphological description, taxonomic assessment and a summary of contextual information.

Debate Report

Students will participate in a class debate in teams. They will select topics from a list distributed at the beginning of the course. The debate allows the students to become aware of the contested nature of much of the knowledge in the discipline, as well as to develop their information literacy skills. Time for preparation will be given in the second part of the classes for a number of weeks. A report on the debate will be written by students individually.