

9th & 10th Grade Students Learn Foundations in Evolutionary Anthropology!



Report from the Students:

On Friday the 24th of January students from ninth and tenth grade took part in the so called 'Studium generale'.

We were offered the opportunity to spend a school day at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, where an American scientist introduced us to the things that are being done there. At the institute they study biology, culture, mental abilities and social systems of human populations as well as of primates closely related to humans.

With this in mind, we had a look at an experiment that was supposed to show whether 6 year old children or chimpanzees were more cooperative and more likely to share. Against our first thoughts that the chimps might be more cooperative, it turned out that children were actually better at this, because they have the ability to talk to each other. This was not expected by any of us, so we were really interested in what we would be surprised with next.

We discussed why the ability to communicate with words was so important for our ancestors and why they developed the way they did. After having learned why our ancestors lived in communities and why our brain constantly compares us to others, we had lunch.

Full with food and hungry for more information we went to a computer 'lab' where we took a look at computer simulations that help scientists to make statements about the development of the society. We were even allowed to work with one of those ourselves and create an ideal and sustainable community. NOT EASY, but not impossible.

In the end we answered a questionnaire and were simply overwhelmed with all the knowledge we've gained.

It was amazing.