

Scott Claessens

School of Anthropology and Archaeology
University of Bristol

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Employment

University of Bristol, UK

Senior Research Associate, School of Anthropology and Archaeology 2026–Present

University of Kent, UK

Research Associate, School of Psychology 2024–2026

University of Auckland, NZ

Research Fellow, School of Psychology 2022–2024

Teaching Fellow, School of Psychology 2023

Academic Mentor, School of Psychology 2022

Graduate Teaching Assistant, School of Psychology 2019–2021

Arizona State University, US

Research Scholar, Department of Psychology 2017

Teaching Assistant, Department of Psychology 2017

Marketing Sciences, UK

Research Executive 2015–2016

Education

University of Auckland, NZ

PhD in Psychology 2018–2022

Newcastle University, UK

MRes Evolution and Human Behaviour (Distinction) 2016–2017

University of Bristol, UK

BSc in Psychology (First class honours) 2012–2015

Awards and Honours

- 2022 **Postdoctoral Competition Award** — *Human Behavior and Evolution Society*
- 2018 **Doctoral Academic Scholarship** — *University of Auckland*

Funding

- 2026–2029 **Leverhulme Trust** — Research Project Grant, RPG-2025-137, The origins of inequality and pathways to a more egalitarian society (£250,604). Role: Investigator (with PI Kit Opie).

Research Interests

The evolution of cooperation | Behavioural economics | Cultural evolution | Open science | Evolution and human behaviour | Cross-cultural psychology | Political and moral psychology

Research Skills

- Programming (R, Python, Javascript, SPSS)
- Survey creation with *Qualtrics*
- Statistical modelling with *brms*, *lavaan*, and *Stan*
- Reproducible analytic pipelines with *targets*
- Behavioural economic games with *oTree*
- Open science (e.g. preregistration)
- Project version control with *Git* and *GitHub*

Code Samples

<https://github.com/ScottClaessens/crossNationalCorrelations>
<https://github.com/ScottClaessens/phyloParrot>
<https://github.com/ScottClaessens/covidMaskWearing>
<https://github.com/ScottClaessens/phyloAuthority>
<https://github.com/ScottClaessens/religionWellbeing>

Journal Articles

Claessens, S., Atkinson, Q. D., & Raihani, N. J. (2026). Individual differences in motives for costly punishment. *Communications Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s44271-025-00372-w>

Claessens, S., Veitch, P., & Everett, J. A. (2025). Negative perceptions of outsourcing to artificial intelligence. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 108894. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2025.108894>

Law, K. F., Syropoulos, S., Crimston, C. R., Markowitz, E., Milfont, T. L., **Claessens, S.**, Kyritsis, T., Atkinson, Q., Bastian, B., & Rottman, J. (2025). Cross-national insights into moral expansive-

ness: Selective valuation of nature versus humans. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 102778. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2025.102778>

Bastos, A. P., **Claessens, S.**, Nelson, X. J., Welch, D., Atkinson, Q. D., & Taylor, A. H. (2025). Evidence of self-care tooling and phylogenetic modeling reveal parrot tool use is not rare. *iScience*, 28(4). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.isci.2025.112156>

Jones, K. T., **Claessens, S.**, Chaudhuri, A., Atkinson, Q. D., Osborne, D., & Sibley, C. G. (2025). Validation of the Mini-IPIP6 short-form personality inventory: Honesty-humility predicts cooperation in economic games. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 35(2), e70076. <https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.70076>

Claessens, S., Sibley, C. G., Chaudhuri, A., & Atkinson, Q. D. (2024). Prosocial phenotype predicts political views on hierarchy and redistribution 18 months later. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 16(7), 792–801. <https://doi.org/10.1177/19485506241306869>

Guevara Beltran, D., Ayers, J. D., **Claessens, S.**, Alcock, J., Baciú, C., Cronk, L., Hudson, N. M., Hurmuz-Sklias, H., Miller, G., Tidball, K., et al. (2024). Shared fate was associated with sustained cooperation during the COVID-19 pandemic. *PloS ONE*, 19(9), e0307829. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0307829>

Claessens, S., Kyritsis, T., & Atkinson, Q. D. (2023). Cross-national analyses require additional controls to account for the non-independence of nations. *Nature Communications*, 14(1), 5776. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-023-41486-1>

Heiman, S. L., **Claessens, S.**, Ayers, J. D., Guevara Beltrán, D., Van Horn, A., Hirt, E. R., Aktipis, A., & Todd, P. M. (2023). Descriptive norms caused increases in mask wearing during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Scientific Reports*, 13(1), 11856. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-023-38593-w>

Claessens, S., Sibley, C. G., Chaudhuri, A., & Atkinson, Q. D. (2023). Cooperative and conformist behavioural preferences predict the dual dimensions of political ideology. *Scientific Reports*, 13(1), 4886. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-023-31721-6>

Claessens, S., & Kyritsis, T. (2022). Partner choice does not predict prosociality across countries. *Evolutionary Human Sciences*, 4, e54. <https://doi.org/10.1017/ehs.2022.51>

Sheehan, O., Watts, J., Gray, R. D., Bulbulia, J., **Claessens, S.**, Ringen, E. J., & Atkinson, Q. D. (2022). Coevolution of religious and political authority in Austronesian societies. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 7(1), 38–45. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-022-01471-y>

Claessens, S., Kelly, D., Sibley, C. G., Chaudhuri, A., & Atkinson, Q. D. (2022). Cooperative phenotype predicts climate change belief and pro-environmental behaviour. *Scientific Reports*, 12(1), 12730. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-022-16937-2>

Atkinson, Q. D., **Claessens, S.**, Fischer, K., Forsyth, G. L., Kyritsis, T., Wiebels, K., & Moreau, D. (2022). Being specific about generalisability. *Religion, Brain & Behavior*, 13(3), 284–286. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2153599X.2022.2070251>

Hoogeveen, S., Sarafoglou, A., Aczel, B., Aditya, Y., Alayan, A. J., Allen, P. J., Altay, S., Alzahawi, S., Amir, Y., Anthony, F.-V., et al. (2022). A many-analysts approach to the relation between religiosity and well-being. *Religion, Brain & Behavior*, 13(3), 237–283. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2153599X.2022.2070255>

Claessens, S., Ayers, J. D., Cronk, L., & Aktipis, A. (2021). Need-based transfer systems are more vulnerable to cheating when resources are hidden. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 42(2), 104–112. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2020.08.004>

Krems, J. A., **Claessens, S.**, Fales, M. R., Campenni, M., Haselton, M. G., & Aktipis, A. (2021). An agent-based model of the female rivalry hypothesis for concealed ovulation in humans. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 5(6), 726–735. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-020-01038-9>

Claessens, S., Kyritsis, T., & Atkinson, Q. D. (2020). Revised analysis shows relational mobility predicts sacrificial behavior in Footbridge but not Switch or Loop trolley problems. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 117(24), 13203–13204. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2005012117>

Claessens, S., Fischer, K., Chaudhuri, A., Sibley, C. G., & Atkinson, Q. D. (2020). The dual evolutionary foundations of political ideology. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-020-0850-9>

Neilands, P., **Claessens, S.**, Ren, I., Hassall, R., Bastos, A. P., & Taylor, A. H. (2020). Contagious yawning is not a signal of empathy: No evidence of familiarity, gender or prosociality biases in dogs. *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*, 287(1920), 20192236. <https://doi.org/10.1098/rspb.2019.2236>

Book Chapters

Claessens, S., Chaudhuri, A., Sibley, C. G., & Atkinson, Q. D. (2022). The evolutionary basis of political ideology. In D. Osborne & C. G. Sibley (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of political psychology* (pp. 22–36). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108779104.003>

Preprints

Claessens, S., Kyritsis, T., & Atkinson, Q. D. (2024). *Reply to: Controlling for non-independence of nations should not be the default choice in cross-cultural research*. https://osf.io/preprints/psyarxiv/u7tvp_v1

Claessens, S., Kyritsis, T., & Atkinson, Q. D. (2024). *Controls for non-independence should reflect the data-generating process*. https://osf.io/preprints/psyarxiv/7vj69_v1

Theses

Claessens, S. (2021). *Testing the dual evolutionary foundations of political ideology using incentivised behavioural tasks* [PhD thesis, University of Auckland]. <https://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/items/031a3305-6c53-4d47-8042-69bdfd0efc03>

Claessens, S. (2017). *The benefits of being seen to be cooperative* [Master's thesis, Newcastle University]. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/319990440_The_benefits_of_being_seen_to_be_cooperative

Popular Articles

Chaudhuri, A., Atkinson, Q. D., & **Claessens, S.** (2023). *Climate change believers are more likely to cooperate with strangers, new research finds*. The Conversation. <https://theconversation.com/climate-change-believers-are-more-likely-to-cooperate-with-strangers-new-research-finds-205469>

Conference Presentations

Claessens, S., & Everett, J. A. C. (2025). *Trust in artificial moral advisors across cultures*. Talk. 5th European Experimental Philosophy Conference, Norwich, UK, 11th June 2025.

Claessens, S., Veitch, P., & Everett, J. A. C. (2025). *Saving time but losing face: Negative perceptions of outsourcing to AI*. Talk. Society for Personality and Social Psychology Annual Convention, Denver, Colorado, US, 20th February 2025.

Claessens, S., Greenhill, S., Bouckaert, R., & Atkinson, Q. D. (2024). *Inferring missing grammatical features for the world's languages*. Talk. 27th Annual New Zealand Phylogenomics Meeting, Waiheke Island, Auckland, NZ, 16th February 2024.

Claessens, S., Bastos, A. P., Nelson, X. J., Welch, D., Atkinson, Q. D., & Taylor, A. H. (2023). *Parrot tool use is not rare*. Talk. Faculty of Science Research Fellow Symposium, University of Auckland, NZ, 12th July 2023.

Claessens, S., Kyritsis, T., & Atkinson, Q. D. (2022). *The non-independence of nations and why it matters*. Talk. 4th Cultural Evolution Society Conference, Aarhus, Denmark, 21st September 2022.

Claessens, S., Kyritsis, T., & Atkinson, Q. D. (2022). *The non-independence of nations and why it matters*. Talk. 33rd Annual Conference of the Human Behavior and Evolution Society (Online), 22nd June 2022.

Claessens, S., Fischer, K., & Atkinson, Q. D. (2021). *The dual evolutionary foundations of political ideology*. Talk. Moral Molecules Conference (Online), 20th May 2021.

Claessens, S., Sibley, C. G., Chaudhuri, A., & Atkinson, Q. D. (2019). *Political gaming: Using economic games to study the foundations of political ideology*. Talk. 14th Annual Australia New Zealand Workshop in Experimental Economics, University of Melbourne, Australia, 25th November 2019.

Claessens, S., Sibley, C. G., Chaudhuri, A., & Atkinson, Q. D. (2019). *Political gaming: Using economic games to study the foundations of political ideology*. Poster. University of Auckland Research Showcase, Auckland, NZ, 1st September 2019.

Claessens, S. (2019). *The evolutionary foundations of political ideology*. Talk. 16th Annual InHouse Convention, School of Psychology, University of Auckland, NZ, 22nd February 2019.

Claessens, S., Ayers, J. D., Cronk, L., & Aktipis, A. (2018). *Need-based transfer systems are more vulnerable to cheating when resources are hidden*. Talk. 13th Annual Australia New Zealand Workshop in Experimental Economics, University of Auckland, 26th November 2018.

Invited Lectures and Workshops

Claessens, S. (2025). *The promise of dynamic phylogenetic models for cultural evolution*. Lecture. Department of Linguistic and Cultural Evolution, Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, Leipzig, Germany, 26th November 2025.

Claessens, S. (2025). *Methods in cultural evolution*. Workshop. MPI-EVA/CHANA-PUCP/ELDP Winter School on Language Documentation, Archives, and Quantitative Methods for the Study of Linguistic Diversity and Cultural Evolution, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú in Lima, Peru, 29th August 2025.

Claessens, S. (2025). *Git and GitHub for beginners*. Workshop. European Association for Social Psychology Summer School, University of Kent, UK, 25th July 2025.

Claessens, S. (2021). *The evolution of politics*. Lecture. PSYCH317: Evolution, Behaviour and Cognition, School of Psychology, University of Auckland, NZ, 1st June 2021.

Claessens, S. (2019). *The dual evolutionary foundations of political ideology*. Lecture. ECON271: Behavioural Economics, Business School, University of Auckland, NZ, 1st November 2019.

Open-Source Software

[coevolve](#) R package for Bayesian generalized dynamic phylogenetic models using Stan

Academic Service

Departmental:

- Co-organised [Evolution Research @ Auckland](#) seminar series, University of Auckland

Reviewing for journals:

- Nature Communications
- Nature Computational Science
- Evolution and Human Behavior
- Evolutionary Human Sciences
- Political Behavior
- PLoS ONE

Reviewing for funders:

- Czech Science Foundation

Media Coverage

Podcast appearances:

- 2023 – The Dissenter: [Episode #791](#)

Radio interviews:

- 2021 – bFM: [The Monday Wire](#), 2nd February (with Zoë Larsen Cumming)
- 2021 – Radio New Zealand: [Afternoons](#), 27th January (with Jesse Mulligan)
- 2020 – bFM: [Ready Steady Learn](#), 25th February (with Rachel Ashby)

Media articles:

- 2021 – Daily Mail: [Why ovulation is ‘invisible’ in humans: Prehistoric women evolved to hide their fertility status from other females ‘to avoid conflict over mates’](#)
- 2020 – Stuff: [Dogs’ contagious yawning may not be a sign of empathy – study](#)
- 2020 – Insider: [A new study says human yawns are contagious to dogs but that may not mean what we think it means](#)