

**WESTERN UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate Course Outline 2019-20**

**PHIL3340
Philosophy of Biology for Biologists**

Fall 2019
Tuesday 11:30-12:30, Thursday 11:30- 1:30
Somerville House (SH) 3307

Instructor: Eric Desjardins
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Office Hours: TBA
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DESCRIPTION

An introduction to philosophical methods including reading and writing philosophical arguments, followed by four topical modules. These four modules focus on particular fields within the life sciences: evolutionary biology, genetics and genomics, ecology, and cognitive science. Throughout these modules students will examine cases that highlight various types of philosophical issues related to research in the life sciences, such as: What is life? Is there a fundamental unit of selection? Do moral norms evolve? What are the ethical concerns related to gene editing technology? Is there a balance of nature? To what extent our behaviors and psychology constrained by our biology? An important portion of the course will be discussion-based. A constructive and respectful participation is key for guaranteeing the best experience for everyone in the course.

TEXTS

Reading materials available on OWL.

OBJECTIVES

- Survey some contemporary philosophical debates in the life sciences and explore their historical and social significance.
- Develop analytical and communication skills in philosophy and learn how to apply them to issues arising in the life sciences. This includes using critical thinking methods to identify, interpret, and communicate ideas and arguments, both in writing and in the context of group discussions.
- Develop advanced skills in structuring and leading group discussions.

REQUIREMENTS

- Short assignments (10 in total, 20%)
- Leading discussion (15%)
- Discussion summary (5%)
- Mid-term essay (15%)
- Exam (25%)

- Participation (20%)

LATE POLICY

Always let the instructor know ahead of time if a deadline cannot be met and seek appropriate arrangement. Unless an extension has been granted, work submitted after the due date will receive a 5% deduction per late day (including weekend).

AUDIT

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY POLICIES

The **Department of Philosophy Policies** which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website at <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html>.

It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

ACCOMMODATION

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested.

The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found at

http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

SELF- REPORTED ABSENCE FORM

Students who experience an unexpected illness or injury or an extenuating circumstance (48 hours or less) that is sufficiently severe to temporarily render them unable to meet academic requirements (e.g., attending lectures or labs, writing tests or midterm exams, completing and submitting assignments, participating in presentations) should self-declare using the online Self-Reported Absence portal. This option should be used in situations where the student expects to resume academic responsibilities within 48 hours or less.

The following conditions are in place for self-reporting of medical or extenuating circumstances:

http://westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#SubHeading_322

EVALUATION OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

At least three days prior to the deadline for withdrawal from a course without academic penalty, students will receive assessment of work accounting for at least 15% of their final grade. For 3000- or 4000-level courses in which such a graded assessment is impracticable, the instructor(s) must obtain an exemption from this policy from the Dean and this exemption must be noted on the corresponding course syllabus. In rare instances and at the Dean's discretion, other courses could

receive a similar exemption, which also must be noted in the course syllabus.

COURSE ASSIGNMENT

The last day of scheduled classes in any course will be the last day on which course assignments will be accepted for credit in a course. Instructors will be required to return assignments to students as promptly as possible with reasonable explanations of the instructor's assessment of the assignment.

ACADEMIC OFFENCES

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

PLAGIARISM CHECKING

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519.661.3030 (during class hours) or 519.433.2023 after class hours and on weekends.