

WESTERN UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate Course Outline 2018-19

Philosophy 3340F: Philosophical Issues in Evolutionary Biology

Fall Term

Tu 10:30–12:30, Th 10:30–11:30

UCC 58

Instructor: Wayne C. Myrvold

Office: Stevenson Hall 4143

Office Hours: MW 1:30–2:30

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DESCRIPTION

This course is an examination of several philosophical issues arising from evolutionary biology. We will begin with the origin of the theory, with Darwin and his precursors. We will examine philosophical controversies arising from evolutionary theory. One will be the nature of species: is there a single species concept, applicable in all domains and in all areas of biology, or should biologists employ multiple species concepts? Should they be talking about species at all? Another topic will be the units of selection. Should we take genes or organisms as a whole to be the targets of selection? Is group selection an important factor in evolution? We will also discuss the relation between science and religion, and recent claims by “Intelligent Design” theorists to the effect that biology suggests the intervention of an intelligent designer, and ways in which biologists have responded. We will also explore political and social ramifications of evolutionary theory. Some thinkers draw conclusions about the nature of human society, with political implications, from evolutionary theory; others dispute these conclusions.

TEXTS

Assigned readings available on course OWL site.

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to identify the chief rival theories taken seriously by scientists at the time of Darwin, and outline Darwin’s argument for evolution by natural selection. Students will be able to identify the chief components of the theoretical structure of modern evolutionary biology. Students will also gain an understanding of recent philosophical debates arising from evolutionary biology, and will identify and critically evaluate the views taken on various sides of these debates.

REQUIREMENTS

Regular class attendance and participation in class discussions is required.

Students will write term papers (approx. 2000 words). In the last month of term they will give oral presentations on their term paper topics. There will also be a shorter written assignment (approx. 800 words).

There will be two tests: midterm, and final exam.

Evaluation

Shorter written assignment (due Oct. 24)	15%
Term paper presentation	5%
Peer feedback on term paper presentation	5%
Term paper	25%
Midterm (in class, Nov. 1)	25%
Final exam (TBA, during exam period)	<u>25%</u>
	100%

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.

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

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.