

University of California, Davis
Department of Philosophy
INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY OF BIOLOGY
PHI 38, FALL 2011
107 Cruess, TR 1:40-3 PM

Contact Information

Instructor: Professor Roberta Millstein

Office: 2287 Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH), aka Death Star (corner of 3rd and A)

Office Hours: Tues 12:30-1:30 PM, Thurs 3:10-4:10 PM, and by appointment

E-mail: RLMillstein@UCDavis.edu (*the best way to reach me*)

Phone: 530-554-1398 (Skype voicemail)

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TA: Sarah Roe, sroe@ucdavis.edu

Discussion sections in 103 Wellman. **A01: Tues 6:10-7 PM, A02: Tues 7:10-8 PM**

Required Text

All required readings will be available on the course website on SmartSite, <https://smartsite.ucdavis.edu/>

Course Description

This course investigates philosophical analyses of the concepts and methods biologists use in research and in explanation of their work to the public. It challenges students to evaluate controversial biological issues in social, cultural and political context. Issues to be discussed include: the debates over creationism and intelligent design; the accusation that many evolutionary explanations are “adaptationist,” and whether that is a good or bad thing; whether Darwin’s theory of sexual selection is false and ought to be replaced, and what it says about “human nature”; and debates over the existence of animal minds.

The goals of this course are: 1) to introduce you to some of the major issues within the philosophy of biology; 2) to encourage you to critically examine your own beliefs as well as the beliefs of others; 3) to provide the opportunity to discuss, both in class and in a more sustained written form, your ideas and arguments concerning important issues in the philosophy of biology.

Class Policies and Course Requirements

If you have a documented disability and wish to discuss academic accommodations, or if you would need assistance in the event of an emergency evacuation, please contact me as soon as possible.

You are responsible for *all* material covered in class, including announcements, discussions, etc. – whether you are in class or not. **Take notes on discussions as well as lecture.** Since we will be discussing the readings in class, you should bring the reading for the day to each class.

Announcements are usually made at the beginning of class, so **please be on time.** Comings and goings are disruptive and distracting, so please keep them to a minimum. Cell phones are also distracting; please turn them off. Please do not bring guests (friends, children, etc.) without my permission. Eating in class is ok if it is done quietly and unobtrusively.

Your grade will be based on the following (all dates subject to change):

- 5%** - Comments/questions on each day's readings, **posted to the Forums on SmartSite before class.** CR/NC.
- 5%** - Group work in your Discussion Section. CR/NC.
- 60%** - Three two-page analytical essays submitted on SmartSite by **6 PM Mon: Oct 17, Nov 7, and Nov 28**
- 30%** - Take-home final exam submitted on SmartSite by **8 PM, Wed, Dec 7.**

You must complete all three analytical essays and the final exam in order to pass the class. In the case of a borderline grade, class participation will be given serious consideration.

Important note on plagiarism/cheating:

It is a violation of the Code of Academic Conduct to turn in work that is not your own. This includes: turning in the work of another student with your name on it, buying/copying a paper off the Internet, using the words *or* ideas of others without proper quotation and citation. In accordance with Regulation 550 of the Davis Division of the Academic Senate, **a grade of "0" will be assigned to examinations or assignments on which cheating, plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty is admitted or determined to have occurred by proper adjudication.** If you have trouble with the class material or have personal issues that prevent you from doing your work, come talk to me.

Tentative Reading Schedule - All dates and readings are subject to change. All readings will be available on the course website on SmartSite, <https://smartsite.ucdavis.edu/>

Date	Topic	Reading (by author)
Sep 22	Introduction	Syllabus
Sep 27	Nature of science: inductivism, falsificationism	2 chs. by A.F. Chalmers
Sep 29	Nature of science: scientific revolutions	1 ch. excerpt by A.F. Chalmers
Oct 4	What is evolution? What is creation science?	Various excerpts
Oct 6	Creation science trial	Act 590, Laudan, Ruse
Oct 11	Movie: "Intelligent Design on Trial" - part 1	Behe expert report
Oct 13	Movie: "Intelligent Design on Trial" - part 2	<i>no reading, but post to SmartSite re: movie</i>
Oct 18	Intelligent Design trial	Judge Jones decision (excerpts)
Oct 20	Adaptationism	Darwin excerpt, Barash
Oct 25	Adaptationism	Gould & Lewontin
Oct 27	Adaptationism	Mayr
Nov 1	Adaptationism	Thornhill & Palmer
Nov 3	Sex and sexual selection	Darwin excerpt, Hrdy
Nov 8	Sex and sexual selection	Roughgarden
Nov 10	Sex and sexual selection	Ghiselin
Nov 15	Sex and sexual selection	Potochnik
Nov 17	Animal minds	Kennedy excerpt
Nov 22	Animal minds	Keeley
Nov 24	Thanksgiving - NO CLASS	<i>no reading</i>
Nov 29	Animals minds	Pinker excerpt
Dec 1	Animals minds	Lloyd