

PHIL 105: Science and Philosophy
UIC, Summer 2009, Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:45-1:15, LC A 004

Instructor: Aleks Zarnitsyn
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Office Hours: Tuesdays 9:00-10:00; Thursdays 9:00-10:00 ; and by appointment
Course Reference Number: 18251/18252

Course Description

The focus of this course is evolutionary theory. We will survey various ways, in which evolutionary theory can be thought to connect to morality and various other social issues. (Sample questions: Can morality be thought of as an adaptation? Can/should evolutionary theory give a foundation for our ethical norms? Is there a natural foundation for human cooperation and altruism? Etc.) We will also look at some of the more theoretical issues in philosophy of science.

This course also serves as a general introduction to philosophy and its methods. Reading, thinking and writing about these topics with the hope of acquiring a taste for clarity, precision and good argumentation should prove valuable in the fields other than philosophy.

Text

Richard Dawkins *The Selfish Gene*

Samir Okasha *Philosophy of Science. A Very Short Introduction*

Some additional readings will be distributed in class or posted on-line. Alternatively, we may have to purchase another book. I will announce this in advance.

Assignments and Grading

Students must complete all the required assignments and exams in order to receive a passing grade. No exceptions.

In-Class Work: This is worth 20% of your overall grade. Includes participation, group work, in-class written exercises, possible quizzes, etc. Roughly, half of the points will be given to written work.

Weekly Written Responses: Each week, with the exception of one or two, you will submit a 1.5-2 page written assignment dealing with our readings. I will supply the questions. Your combined score for your written work is worth 20% of your overall grade.

Presentation: Each student will give one presentation on selected material from our main texts. The presentation is worth 20% of your overall grade.

Mid-term Exam: There will one midterm exam, worth 20% of your overall grade.

Final Exam: The final exam is worth 20% of your overall grade. The date of the final exam will be announced in class.

Additional Policies

Make-up Policy for Exams: You must contact me at least two days prior to the exam and make arrangements to take it at some other time. Failure to do so will result in a zero (0) for the exam. Failure to show up for the scheduled make-up exam will result in a zero (0) for the exam.

Academic Dishonesty: Plagiarism in any form is a violation of UIC standards; I will refer suspected cases over to the campus disciplinary committee.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Students with disabilities who require accommodations for access and participation in this course must be registered with the Office of Disability Services [(312) 413 2183 or (312) 413 0123]. Any such students should introduce themselves to me no later than by the end of the second week.

Tentative Schedule of Readings and Lectures

Note on Reading: I will expect you to have read the assigned readings before class devoted to that unit. Some (if not all) readings will require multiple readings. SG - The Selfish Gene; PS - Philosophy of Science; other sources will be distributed.

Week 1 Introduction; Design Arguments; Introduction to Evolution

16 June: PS 1, optional PS 7

18 June: PS 2; Paley; Coyne

Week 2 Grounds for Rejecting Creationism; Introductory Chapters of Dawkins

23 June: Ruse; Laudan

25 June: SG 1-3; PS 3

Week 3 Behavior, Agression, Altruism, Family

30 June: SG 4, 5

2 July : SG 6, 7

Week 4 Kin, Male-Female, etc.

7 July : SG 8, 9

9 July : SG 11, 13

Week 5

14 July: Mid-Term Exam

16 July: Sober and Wilson "Summary of : 'Unto Others'; Frank "Cooperation Through Emotional Commitment"; Frank "Cooperation Through Emotional Commitment"; "Evolutionary Theories of Emotion" (From Sex and Death (Sterelny and Griffiths)) - somewhat optional;

Week 6

21 July: Haidt "The Emotional Dog and Its Rational Tail";

23 July: PS 5

Week 7

28 July: Gibbard "Normative Psychology" from *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings*; Sripada "Punishment and the Strategic Structure of Moral Systems"

30 July: Nagel "Ethics as an Autonomous Theoretical Subject"; Kitcher "Four Ways of "Biologizing" Ethics"; Ruse and Wilson "Moral Philosophy as Applied Science"

Week 8

4 August: Wrap up and Review

7 August: Final Exam 10:30-12:30