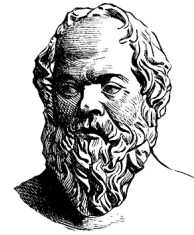




**DARWIN & THE PROBLEMS
OF PHILOSOPHY**

Philosophy 281: Spring 2011
Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 10-10.50am, Room
W/1/62



Prof. Adam Beresford

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C O U R S E D E S C R I P T I O N

The basic idea of this course is to examine a range of traditional philosophical problems in the light of evolutionary theory. It might more modestly be called “Darwin and *some* philosophical problems.”

We’ll begin with an overview of some basics and central tenets of Darwin’s and neo-Darwinian theory itself. Then we’ll consider the following four areas of ongoing philosophical debate, in the light of evolutionary theory: (1) Ethics and meta-ethics — where we will look the new science of evolutionary psychology, and its critics. (2) Philosophy of Mind — where we will look into the debates over the nature of consciousness, the innate architecture of the mind, and the relation between mind and brain. (3) Philosophy of Religion — where we will consider some recent arguments over the clash between evolutionary theory and traditional revealed religion as well as rationally defended theism (‘natural religion’). (4) Epistemology, and in particular Scepticism and Idealism — where we will consider what happens when scepticism about the external world, as well as the idea of the primacy of the mind in determining reality, meet Darwinian theory.

T E X T S

For the class, you must buy

Daniel C. Dennett, ***Darwin's Dangerous Idea***, Simon & Schuster, New York (1995). Henceforth, referred to as *DDI*.

Other readings referred to in the schedule will be provided in handouts, either in hard copy or in PDF or on the dedicated class page on the website (**www.adamberesford.com**). Please always make sure you have the required handouts in hard copy or easily legible electronic copy in class (an iPad is just about acceptable, but an iPhone is not).

SCHEDULE

The schedule is organised according to topics and readings. It shows the order in which we will work through the topics, and for the most part the sequence that we will follow through the readings. You should try to get through the readings for each *week* in advance. I will also give more detailed directions, as the semester goes on, as to which readings we will be concentrating on in a given class. If you miss a class, make sure you check with me, or another student, as to what reading is being discussed in the next class. (See the detailed bibliography below for full titles).

Week 2 (1.31, 2.2, 2.4)	[1] The Argument from Design (cont.); instinct (Origins Ch. 7, p.53ff); Universal Acid, Skyhooks & Cranes, <i>DDI</i> ch.3
Week 3 (2.7, 2.9, 2.11)	[1] Dawkins, [SG]; <i>DDI</i> ch. 7 (if time)
Week 4 (2.14, 2.16, 2.18)	[2] Evolutionary psychology 1: Axelrod [EC], Pinker [MI], De Waal [P&P], <i>DDI</i> ch. 16-17
Week 5 (only 2.23, 2.25)	[2] Evolutionary psychology 2: Pinker [HMW], Haidt [EDRT]
Week 6 (2.28, 3.2, 3.4)	[2] Critics of Evolutionary Psychology: Korsgaard [P&P], Singer [P&P], Williams [MSH], Harris [ML], Fodor [RvP]
Week 7 (3.7, 3.9, 3.11)	[3a] Consciousness 1: Searle [MC], Chalmers [CM] FIRST 6-PAGE PAPER DUE ON WEDNESDAY 9TH
	Spring Break
Week 8 (3.21, 3.23, 3.25)	[3a] Consciousness 2: Dennett [CE, DWWAI], Turing [] — MID-TERM EXAM, FRIDAY 25th

Week 9 (3.28, 3.30, 4.1)	[3a] Consciousness 3: Dennett [B], Ramachandran [PM]	
Week 10 (4.4, 4.6, 4.8)	[3b] Innate cognition 1: Pinker [LI] 'The Big Bang'; Dennett <i>DDI</i> , 13-14	
Week 11 (4.11, 4.13, 4.15)	[3b] Innate cognition 2: Pinker [ST], 'Fifty Thousand Innate Concepts'	
Week 12 (only 4.20, 4.22)	[4] Theism 1: Ruse [BGDA], [CDBC]; Miller [FDG] SECOND 5-PAGE PAPER DUE ON FRIDAY 22ND	
Week 13 (4.25, 4.27, 4.29)	[4] Theism 2: Dawkins [BW].]	[5] Scepticism 1: Descartes [M1]; Berkeley [D]
Week 14 (5.2, 5.4, 5.6)	[5] Scepticism 2: Dawkins [CMI], Pinker [ST] 'Cleaving the Air'; [Guest lecture by Professor Kaye?]	
Week 15 (5.9, 5.11)	Short final exam.	

Part 1. Darwinian theory

- Darwin, *Origin of Species*, Chapters 4, 6 & 7
- Richard Dawkins [SG], *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford University Press, 1976); chapters 2 & 3 ('The Replicators' & 'Immortal Coils')
- Dennett, *DDI*, Chapters 1-4
- Dennett, *DDI*, Chapter 10 (responses to some supposed criticisms of the theory of evolution by natural selection)

Part 2. Evolutionary Psychology and its Critics

- Robert Axelrod [EC], *The Evolution of Cooperation*, Basic Books, 1984; Chapters 1-3.

- Jonathan Haidt, [EDRT] 'The Emotional Dog and Its Rational Tail: A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment.' *Psychological Review* 2001. Vol. 108. No. 4, 814-834
- Steven Pinker [MI], 'The Moral Instinct', *New York Times Magazine*, January 13, 2008.
- Steven Pinker [HMW] *How the Mind Works*, Norton & co. 1997, 2009; Chapter 6, 402-418, ('Hotheads').
- Franz De Waal, [P&P] *Primates and Philosophers*, Princeton, 2006. (Part I, 'Morally Evolved') 1-59.
- Christine Korsgaard, response to De Waal, in [P&P], 98-120
- Peter Singer, response to DeWaal, in [P&P], 140-161
- Bernard Williams [MSH], *Making Sense of Humanity*; 'Evolution, Ethics & the Representation Problem'
- Dennett, *DDI*, Chapters 16-17.
- Sam Harris [ML], *The Moral Landscape*, Free Press, 2010, 55-112: Chapter 2, 'Good and Evil'.
- Jerry Fodor [RvP], review of Pinker's *How the Mind Works*, London Review of Books, Jan. 22, 1998.
- You may wish to browse the *Center for Evolutionary Psychology* website: <http://www.psych.ucsb.edu/research/cep/index.html>. In particular, the 'primer': <http://www.psych.ucsb.edu/research/cep/primer.html>

Part 2. Mind, Consciousness, Innate Structure, Mind & Brain

a. Consciousness

- Searle [MC], *The Mystery of Consciousness*, (originally from *the New York Review of Books*; published 1997, 95-163; Chapters 5 & 6 (Exchanges with Daniel Dennett and David Chalmers).
- David Chalmers [CM], *The Conscious Mind*, Oxford, 1997; (selections, on the nature of consciousness)
- Dennett [CE], *Consciousness Explained*, Chapter 7, 'The Evolution of Consciousness.'
- Dennett [DWWAI], 'In Darwin's Wake, Where Am I?' (*The Cambridge Companion to Darwin*); also

- Dennett [B], *Brainchildren*, Essays 9 & 10, 'The Practical Requirements for Making a Conscious Robot,' & 'The Unimagined Preposterous of Zombies.'
- Vikram Ramachandran [PB], *Phantoms in the Brain*, Chapters 4 & 12, 'The Zombie in the Brain' & 'Do Martians See Red.'

b. Innate structure, evolution of the mind

- Steven Pinker [LI], *The Language Instinct*, 1994 & Harper Collins, 2000. Chapter 11, 'The Big Bang.'
- Dennett, *DDI*, Chapter 13-14
- Plato's *Meno* (my translation, excerpt)
- Steven Pinker [ST], *The Stuff of Thought*, Viking, 2007; Chapters 3, 'Fifty Thousand Innate Concepts'

Part 3. Theism

- Michael Ruse [BGDA], 'Belief in God in a Darwinian Age', in *The Cambridge Companion to Darwin*, Hodge and Radick eds., 2003, essay 14.
- Michael Ruse [CDBC], *Can a Darwinian be a Christian?*, Cambridge 2004; Chapters 1 & 2.
- Richard Dawkins [BW], *The Blind Watchmaker*, Norton 1996; Chapter 1, 'Explaining the very Improbable'.
- Kenneth Miller [FDG], *Finding Darwin's God*, Harper 2007, Chapter 9.

Part 4. Scepticism and Idealism

- Descartes' *Meditation 1* [MI]
- Berkeley [D] *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous, in opposition to Sceptics and Atheists*; First Dialogue.
- Hume [E], *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding*, sections IV and V.
- Richard Dawkins [CMI], *Climbing Mount Improbable*, Norton 1997, Chapter 5, 'The Forty-Fold Path to Enlightenment'.
- Steven Pinker [ST], *The Stuff of Thought*, Viking, 2007; Chapters 4, 'Cleaving the Air'

C O U R S E R E Q U I R E M E N T S

1. **Papers.** You will write two six-page-minimum papers, and take a mid-term exam, and a shorter final exam. Topics for papers will be distributed in class. If you are at all unsure of what is required of you for papers on these texts, make sure you make full use of my office hours for discussing your writing in detail.

5. **Office Hours:** Make use of my office hours. Come and talk to me about things you have not understood in class, and for help with your papers. I am happy to look at drafts, and give advice before you write final versions, as well as help with planning.

Break down of the grade: First paper: 20%; Mid-term: 30%; Second paper: 35%; Short final: 15%

A C A D E M I C H O N E S T Y

When it comes to writing papers please make sure everything you give me is your own work. If you quote somebody, you have to say clearly where the quote comes from. I approve of and encourage use of internet resources for researching around this material. But please make sure that any material that you use in your papers gets properly cited. Small quotations are acceptable as long as they are properly flagged. Please take note of regulations on academic dishonesty. You can view them here:

www.umb.edu/student_affairs/programs/judicial/procedures