

OEB 128: From Darwin to Derrida
The evolution of meaning and purpose
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The seminar will read my recent book (*From Darwin to Derrida*) and would be suitable both for science students and for non-science students who wish to learn some evolutionary biology.

Natural selection is a purposeless process that has evolved purposive creatures. The key innovation in the evolution of life was the origin of a textual record of past choices of natural selection contained within genetic sequences. The information in genes comes from the environment that selects. The textual record evolves as organisms are judged by the performance of the text in environmental context. The course is capped at 12 and has in the past be oversubscribed. I am asking students interested in being considered to read the Prologue and Chapter 1 and send me a couple of pages on questions they would like to talk about in the first session and also the reasons they want to take the course. These should be submitted to me by email. I will use these submissions to choose the class with a focus on diverse perspectives.

During term we will meet for two hours once a week at 3 pm Monday. Students are expected to read 1-2 chapters a week and to have sent in 1-2 pages of questions/thoughts by the preceding Friday. I use these submissions to decide where I will focus our discussion during the seminar. The grading will be based on these weekly submissions and participation in the seminar.

Schedule:

Week	Readings
1. January 22	Prologue, Chapter 1 (Barren virgins)
2. January 29	Chapter 2 (Social Genes)
3. February 5	Chapter 3 (The gene 'meme')
4. February 12	Chapter 4 (Differences that make a difference)
5. February 19	Chapter 5 (Limber robots and lumbering genes)
6. February 26	Chapters 6 and 7 (Intrapersonal conflict and reciprocity)
7. March 4	Chapters 7 (Reflexions on Self)
8. March 18	Chapters 9 and 10 (Causes and forms)
9. March 25	Chapter 11 and Interlude (Fighting the good cause)
10. April 1	Chapter 12 and X (Making sense)
11. April 8	Chapter 13 (The origin of meaning)
12. April 15	Chapter 14 (The past and future of freedom)
13. April 22	Chapter 15 (Darwinian hermeneutics)

February 19 is President's Day and is, I believe, a holiday. That week I expect students to have read and commented on Chapter 5 but we will not meet as a group.