PHI 3-360 **Evolution and Philosophy** Jim White

2018-19 Prall House

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**Class Times**: M-F 12:00-3:00. **Office Hours:** M,W,F 11:00-12:00

Tu 3:00-3:30

**Objectives**:

As scientific theories go, the theory of evolution has generated a history of controversy; many people find the theory difficult to swallow, despite large-scale scientific support for it. It has been rejected (and defended) on a variety of grounds: scientific, religious, and moral. We want to get a grasp of the theory of evolution itself—what it says, what sort of support it has, what it can be used to explain, what limits there are to what it can explain—and see what (if any) implications it has for philosophy, for religion, for morality, and generally for the understanding we have of ourselves and our world. We’ll approach satisfying this goal in the ways philosophy typically does, by reading, talking, and writing about challenging material.

This course supports the Educational Priorities and Outcomes of Cornell College with *respect to its categories of Knowledge, Inquiry, Reasoning, and Communication*: students will come to understand Darwin’s theory of evolution and reflect on its significance for philosophy and, more generally, for the understanding we have of ourselves. Students will consider critically a variety of positions about Darwin’s theory and attempt to develop a coherent picture of the theory and its significance.

**Books**:

Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species* (Bantam, 1999)

Philip Kitcher, *Living With Darwin* (Oxford, 2007)

James Rachels, *Created From Animals* (Oxford, 1990)

Much other reading will be assigned and placed on Moodle as needed.

**Course Requirements:**

(1) Daily readings, attendance, class engagement (15%)

(2) Two papers each of about 5 pages in length (35%)

(3) At least 6 short-answer quizzes (25%)

(4) Final exam (25%)

**Papers/commentaries:** Due on the 2nd and 3rd Fridays of the block at 9 AM. An automatic extension until noon the next day (Saturday) will be given to anyone attending class on Friday. I will provide suggested topics for each paper. Generally, papers should be *philosophical*, where, for our purposes, this means they should be analytical or argumentative papers. Only extreme circumstances justify turning in a paper late, and these should be cleared if in any way possible before the event in question. I am happy to read drafts of papers and make suggestions for their improvement. *Make sure you document carefully material you use in writing your papers. Academic dishonesty will result in your failing the course*.

The **short-answer quizzes** will generally consist of identification/definition questions answerable in one or two sentences. *Material for quizzes will come from the reading assigned for the day of the quiz and from previous class discussions*. They should take around 15 minutes to complete. Three of them are scheduled, as noted on the syllabus (October 29, November 5 and 13). The other three will be surprises! Because they cover current material, quizzes cannot be made up.

The **final exam** will consist of three or four essay questions concerned with arguments we’ve discussed.

I also expect your **attendance** and **engagement** in class. This is a philosophy class and unless you are actively engaged in thinking about the issues we'll be discussing, you are not functioning as a philosopher. In particular, I am interested in knowing that you are *doing the assigned reading*. I expect that over the course of the block you will make it clear to me that you are so reading, by answering questions concerned with the reading and engaging in discussions centered the readings. I will also regularly assign topics for mini-classroom reports. These will be opportunities to provide the class with information about a person or issue or problem. Everyone is expected to take these on.

**Attendance**: *Missing 2 or more classes will result in your receiving a zero for this component of your grade. Missing 4 or more will result in your failing the course*.

Our classroom will be an electronics-free zone: no computers, cell phones, or other sorts of electronic devices may be on table tops or otherwise visible in class.

**Academic Honesty:**

Cornell College expects all members of the Cornell community to act with academic integrity. An important aspect of academic integrity is respecting the work of others. A student is expected to explicitly acknowledge ideas, claims, observations, or data of others, unless generally known. When a piece of work is submitted for credit, a student is asserting that the submission is her or his work unless there is a citation of a specific source. If there is no appropriate acknowledgement of sources, whether intended or not, this may constitute a violation of the College’s requirement for honesty in academic work and may be treated as a case of academic dishonesty. The procedures regarding how the College deals with cases of academic dishonesty appear in The Catalogue, under the heading “Academic Honesty."

Remember, violating this policy means failing the class.

**Students With Disabilities:**

Cornell College makes reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities.  Students should notify the Coordinator of Academic Support and Advising and their course instructor of any disability related accommodations within the first three days of the term for which the accommodations are required, due to the fast pace of the block format.  For more information on the documentation required to establish the need for accommodations and the process of requesting the accommodations, see [http://www.cornellcollege.edu/academic-support-and-advising/disabilities/index.shtml](http://www.cornellcollege.edu/academic-support-and-advising/disabilities/index.shtml" \t "_blank).

## Tentative Schedule for the first few days (The readings for each date are to be done by class on that date and are subject to change):

Oct. 22 Introduction.

23 Rachels, *Created From Animals*, chapter 1. Paley (PDF on Moodle),

Malthus: ( <http://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1798malthus.asp> ), Darwin, *Origin*, Introduction.

24 Darwin, chapters 1-4.