

PHI 310: Topics in Philosophy of Science: Philosophy of Biology
Spring 2021
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In this course, we will examine some fundamental problems in the philosophy of biology. First, we will focus on the claims of evolutionary theory. We will consider in particular: the questions of the status of evolutionary theory compared to other scientific theories and the role of evolutionary theory in offering naturalistic explanations of seemingly goal-oriented phenomena. We will consider two controversies about the levels of biological organization at which natural selection operates and about the definition of biological individuality. We will then investigate the group of issues surrounding claims that natural selection can explain complex psychological, social, and cultural facts about human beings (as claimed by evolutionary psychology and sociobiology). In the last part of the class we will explore alternative concepts of life and consider the consequences of contemporary research in “A-Life” (artificial life) and theoretical xenobiology.

Required Book: *Sex and Death: An Introduction to Philosophy of Biology* by K. Sterelny and P.E. Griffiths. (approximately \$35.00 from various book sellers)

