

ABRIDGED SYLLABUS

Course Information

Course Number: PHIL 1830
Course Name: Philosophy of Biology
Classroom: TBD
Meeting Times: TR 1:45-3:14pm
Satisfies: Nat Sci & Math Sector
Prerequisites: None

Professor's Information

Name: Prof. Quayshawn Spencer
Office: Cohen Hall, room 464
Office Hours: W 10:30am-12:00pm, and
by appointment
Email: qspencer@upenn.edu

Course Description

What was Darwin's theory of evolution, and why is it a better theory of the origin of terrestrial taxa than creation theory? What is a species? Do species really exist? If so, do species exist objectively, or as a matter of pragmatic utility? What was Mendel's theory of the gene, and why was it better than other 19th century theories of heredity? What is a race? Is racial membership a genetic fact, a social fact, both, or neither? These are all questions asked in the philosophy of biology, which is the philosophical study of biology. This course will show how the careful study of biology gives rise to deep philosophical questions about humans or the world in which we live. The course is divided into two parts. The first part is dedicated to exploring philosophical questions surrounding evolutionary theory. The second part is dedicated to exploring philosophical questions surrounding the theory of the gene.

Required Texts

1. Darwin, Charles. (1999). *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*. New York: Random House. (ISBN: 0553214632)
2. Hempel, Carl. (1966). *The Philosophy of Natural Science*. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall. (ISBN: 0-13-663823-6)
3. Additional readings will be posted on Blackboard.