

College of Arts – Online Course Outline

Course Code:	Section:	Semester:
PHIL*6740	01	F13
Course Title: Philosophy of Biology		
Instructor: Stefan Linquist & Ryan T. Gregory		
Brief Course Synopsis: <p>Over the past century, biological science has undergone many profound advances including the synthesis of evolutionary theory and genetics, the rise of ecology as a science, and the discovery of DNA (to mention a few). A wide range of foundational questions have emerged in the wake of these developments. Is there progress in evolution? Can all of evolutionary biology be understood in terms of selfish genes? Are ecology and evolution historical or natural sciences? Can simple biological models explain complex living systems? Part of this course explores these and other related issues from a philosophical perspective. This course also considers the implications of biology on philosophy. For example, if morality, reason, and emotion have been shaped by natural selection, how does this impact the way that philosophers approach these disciplines? If morality could have evolved differently, in what sense are moral norms true or false?</p> <p>No background in biology or philosophy is required for this course. We tend to begin with introductory texts and move quickly into some more technical materials.</p> <p>The course is co-taught by a biologist and a philosopher, whom are both in attendance at all of the seminars. Students also come from different disciplines. This collaboration tends to facilitate cross-disciplinary understanding.</p> <p>Assessment is based on a short midterm paper, a longer term paper, and class participation.</p> <p>Textbook(s): TBA</p>		