

Mount St. Mary's University
Spring 20__

MAP 5__ (PHIL 4__) Darwin and Naturalism
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[room & meeting time]
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and by appointment

Course Description

One of the most potent movements in philosophy the past century is naturalism, the view that all of reality consists of the order of nature. Philosophical naturalism strongly influences scientific theorizing and practice, as well as everyday worldviews. In this course students will analyze naturalism as a cross-disciplinary intellectual phenomenon, clarify the different meanings of naturalism, and construct informed arguments about naturalism in philosophy and in science.

We will begin by briefly examining the various meanings of the term “naturalism,” especially the distinction between, and claimed link between, metaphysical naturalism and methodological naturalism. We will also discuss varieties of naturalistic views, and the central tenets most often characterizing naturalistic philosophies.

The first unit will examine the historical origins of naturalism in science through the content and reception of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. We will read from this work, and from Gertrude Himmelfarb's book on the historical and intellectual context of Darwinism. The unit will conclude with a writing assignment asking students to identify and detail the philosophical issues raised by Darwin's work, clearly distinguishing them from the related scientific claims. At the end of the first unit, we will begin a weekly lunchtime discussion table, to which undergraduates will be invited. Students are expected to attend on a rotating basis and to take part in the discussion and Q&A.

In the second unit, we will read two contemporary critics of philosophical naturalism: the philosopher Gilson and the theologian Haught. Discussion will focus on types of naturalism, and whether Darwin's methods and theories entail some form of naturalism. Students will write a summary and analysis of each critique, followed by a comparison and evaluation.

Each of the first two units ends with a week of discussion and debate. Students will show their command of the material in these discussions, and may be assigned a side to argue in debate on a particular question.

During the semester, students will also prepare notes for and present in teams at meetings of local youth groups, on a topic related to the course material.

The third unit features weekly guest speakers in the fields of science and theology. During the third unit, students will also discuss and select individual scientific research topics. Each student will select an specific area or topic to research in recent scientific literature, then write and deliver to the class an accessible, short (10m) summary of an article.

The final week of the course will feature a panel discussion, open to the public, on a class-chosen topic dealing with the relation between religion, philosophy, and science. The final exam will be by oral examination.

Course Objectives

Students completing this course will:

1. Define naturalism and its various forms and tenets
2. Explain key arguments for and against naturalism
3. Describe accurately, accessibly, and in detail contemporary scientific findings or theories in one specific area for a nonspecialist audience
4. Distinguish scientific claims from underlying or related philosophical claims or assumptions
5. Articulate and argue for a clear view with respect to naturalism and the sciences
6. Speak with confidence and authority about the unity of truth and the integration of all forms of knowledge

Assignments

Writing:

- Short papers due Weeks 1, 5, 7, 9, 10
- Research article summary, due during Weeks 12-14
- Notes for youth group presentations
- Masters candidates only: a two page Qualifying Paper proposal, due Week 15
- Students will write five short papers and a summary of a recent scientific research article approved by the instructor. Masters candidates will also write a two page Qualifying Paper proposal based on their work with course material.

Speaking:

- Debates in Weeks 5, 10
- Ongoing lunch table discussions, Weeks 5-14
- Team presentations to local and diocesan youth groups
- Engagement with guest speakers, Weeks 11-14
- Presentation of research findings
- Final Exam: oral

- Because of its pastoral focus, much of this course's evaluation will be oral. Students will take part in two classroom debates and discussions. They will also, on a rotating basis, attend a weekly lunch table discussion and Q&A session in the dining hall. Undergraduates will be invited to attend and ask questions about philosophical and scientific issues. Students will also be assigned in small groups to present to local youth groups and groups in their home diocese. Students are expected to ask questions of and converse with the guest speakers during four weeks late in the semester. The final exam will be a 15 minute oral examination, dealing with all aspects of the course, including the student's specific research summary.

Bibliography

Required:

- Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species*
- Etienne Gilson, *From Aristotle to Darwin and Back Again: A Journey in Final Causality, Species, and Evolution*
- John Haught, *Is Nature Enough? Meaning and Truth in the Age of Science*
- Gertrude Himmelfarb, *Darwin and the Darwinian Revolution*

Other Relevant Sources:

- Janet Browne, *Darwin's Origin of Species: A Biography*
- Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker*
- Peter Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Modern Science*
- John Haught, *Deeper Than Darwin: The Prospect for Religion in the Age of Evolution*
- Stanley Jaki, *The Saviour of Science*
- Don O'Leary, *Roman Catholicism and Modern Science: A History*
- Jude Dougherty and Stanley Harrison, "Naturalism" in *New Catholic Encyclopedia Supplement 2012-13: Ethics and Philosophy*, vol. 3
- John Carlson, "Naturalism" in *Words of Wisdom: A Philosophical Dictionary for the Perennial Tradition*
- Peter Angeles, "Naturalism" in *The HarperCollins Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2nd ed.
- Various authors, "Naturalism" entries in several other philosophy reference sources

Weekly Schedule

Week 1 – Orientation, Varieties of naturalism, Main tenets of naturalism

- Reading: Handouts from various philosophical reference works
- Writing: summary of naturalism and its varieties (see Objective 1)

UNIT 1

Week 2 – Darwin's Evidence and Conclusions

- Reading: Darwin, Origin of Species, selections

Week 3 – Darwin's Struggles with the Theory

- Reading: Darwin, Origin of Species, selections
- Reading: Himmelfarb, Darwin and the Darwinian Revolution, selections

Week 4 – Context for and Reactions to Darwin's Theory

- Reading: Himmelfarb, Darwin and the Darwinian Revolution, selections

Week 5 – Discussion, In-Class Debate

- Writing: Philosophical issues raised by Darwin's work (see Objective 4)
- Lunch table discussions begin, run through Week 14

UNIT 2

Weeks 6-7 – One Theological Critique of Naturalism

- Reading: Haught, Is Nature Enough?
- Writing: Summarize and analyze Haught's critique (see Objective 2)

Weeks 8-9 – One Philosophical Critique of Naturalism

- Reading: Gilson, From Aristotle to Darwin
- Writing: Summarize and analyze Gilson's critique (see Objective 2)

Week 10 – Discussion, In-Class Debate

- Writing: Compare & evaluate Haught's and Gilson's critiques (see Objectives 2 & 5)

UNIT 3

Week 11 – Planning for Research and Panel

- Discussion to select panel discussion topic
- Discussion of research articles selection

- Guest Speaker

Weeks 12-14 – Guest Speakers and Research Presentations

- Guest Speaker
- Presentation of research summaries

Week 15 – Panel, Conclusion

- Panel Discussion
- Concluding discussions

Final Exam: 15 minute oral exam, by appointment