Philosophy of Biology
(Graduate Seminar: Philosophy 290)
Rasmus Grønfeldt Winther, rgw@ucsc.edu; www.rgwinther.com
Department of Philosophy; University of California, Santa Cruz
Winter 2014; Humanities 1, room 400; 12-3 pm Tuesdays
January 1, 2014

In this graduate seminar, we shall explore philosophical questions and thematics surrounding the biological sciences as they manifest themselves at three levels of organization: (i) genetics/body, (ii) mind, and (iii) society. The biological sciences are pertinent to each of these levels (and “are” the first level). This kind of multi-level and multi-dimensional investigation will allow us to see the biological sciences in context, and to bring in normative and political concerns.

Each of the three sections of this class addresses one level of organization, and is divided into two themes. Note that methodology figures prominently in the assigned material for this course. There will also be ample time and space for pause. At the end of each section, we shall spend one class period without readings, for presentations and discussions of the previous two weeks. This will allow us to integrate themes, clarify confusions, and touch base.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS
1. Weekly “think pieces” of no more than 1 page (and possibly less). To be read/discussed in class.
2. One presentation (2-3 pages) during one of three “touch base” sessions (Weeks 4, 7, and 10).
3. A term paper of approx. 10 pages. Rough draft due Week 8-ish. Final draft due during finals week. (You must talk to me if you wish to write on a topic of your own choosing, beyond the given prompts.)
4. Class participation.

GENERAL CLASS MOTTOS
+ Prøv igen, spørg en ven, spørg en voksen.
+ “Back to the Academy” – absolute minimal electronic communication.

WRITING ADVICE
Writing is essential to our craft as philosophers. Your writing can always improve. Here are some relevant online resources. Read and enjoy!

1. Guidelines for philosophical writing (first one is in course packet):
   http://www.public.asu.edu/~dportmor/tips.pdf
   http://www.bps.cam.ac.uk/research/wp.html
   http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html

2. Guidelines for essay writing, in general:
3. Oxford English Dictionary. You have online to this extraordinary resource at: http://www.oed.com


BOOKS TO PURCHASE (All available at the Literary Guillotine):

4. Course packet (will be available in early January 2014).

WARNING
Academic misconduct will not be tolerated. Please consult: http://www.ucsc.edu/academics/academic_integrity/index.html

READING LIST

Week 1 (Thursday Jan 9): INTRODUCTION + Levins, Richard; Lewontin, Richard. 1985. The Dialectical Biologist. [Selections]

I. BIOLOGY AND GENETICS/BODY

Adaptationism (Week 2; Jan 14):


Reductionism (Week 3; Jan 21):


Week 4 (Jan 28): Touch Base.
II. BIOLOGY AND MIND

   Embodied Cognition (Week 5; Feb 4):
   

   http://people.ucsc.edu/~mlwilson/publications/Embodied_Cog_PBR.pdf


   http://philpapers.org/rec/WINCMR

   Methodology (Biology and Mind) (Week 6; Feb 11):


Week 7 (Feb 18): Touch Base.

III. BIOLOGY AND SOCIETY

   Race (Week 8; Feb 25):


   Methodology (Biology and Society) (Week 9; March 4):


Week 10 (March 11): Touch Base & Wrap-Up.