Philosophy of Nature I

**Term 2 – 2023/2024**

**Lectures**: Tuesdays 12:35-13:55 (0.28 Streatham Court)

**Lecturer:** Celso Neto (C.Alves-Neto@exeter.ac.uk)

**Office:** 1st Floor Byrne House, St. Germain Road

**Office Hours:** Wednesdays 13-15(online or in person)or by appointment

**Zoom Info (Office Hours):** <https://Universityofexeter.zoom.us/j/95482808749?pwd=ck5rUDZwNWh3d3o1TkFqTGhjQml5Zz09> Meeting ID: 954 8280 8749 Password: 407654

**Tutorials:** Tuesdays (Fortnightly) – Dorothea Belcheva (db585@exeter.ac.uk)

# Course Description

What is Nature? How do (should) humans relate to it? This module introduces you to these and other central issues in the philosophy of nature. The relation between humans and the natural world is examined from different perspectives, including Darwinism and non-Western philosophy. The module provides a historical reconstruction of these traditions and discusses their ethical implications for our (human) actions today. Students with an interest in philosophy of science will enjoy this module in particular, but it also speaks to those who have interdisciplinary interests in the ethical and ideological appeals to nature in Western and Non-Western culture.

# Assessment

* *Essay Plan*: 500 words (formative, 0% of the final mark). Deadline: Feb 9 via e-mail
* *Essay*: 2000 words (summative, 50% of the final mark). Deadline: Week 6 - 23rd February at 2pm. Details: online submission, 2000 words
* *Written Exam* (summative, 50% of the final mark). Deadline: Exam Period, May

Essay questions will be available on ELE. Essays should address the chosen question and must follow the structure of the Essay Plan. Guidelines for developing the Essay Plan will be available on ELE. Marking criteria are also described there.

The written exam will be marked for clarity, accuracy, depth, and scope of knowledge. Sample questions will be distributed for study purposes before the exam.

# Schedule and Readings

# Week 1: Introduction

# *No Required Readings*

# Complementary: Sober (2000). “Creationism.” In: Philosophy of Biology. 2nd Edition. Westview.

# Week 2: Design

* Required Reading: Behe, M. J., (2009). Irreducible complexity: Obstacle to Darwinian evolution. In: *Philosophy of biology: an anthology*, *32*, 427.
* Complementary: Sober, E. (2007). What is wrong with intelligent design?. *The Quarterly Review of Biology*, *82*(1), 3-8.

# Week 3: Fine-Tuning

* Required Reading: Swinburne, R. (2003). The Argument to God From Fine-Tuning Reassessed 1. In *God and design* (pp. 106-124). Routledge.
* Suggested Reading: Sober E. (2018) The Design Argument. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 5.

# Week 4: Gaia

* Required Reading: Kirchner, J. W. (2002). The Gaia hypothesis: fact, theory, and wishful thinking. *Climatic change*, *52*(4), 391-408.
* Suggested Reading I: Lenton, T. M., & Latour, B. (2018). Gaia 2.0. *Science*, *361*(6407), 1066-1068.

# Week 5: Life

* Required Reading: Mariscal, C., & Doolittle, W. F. (2020). Life and life only: a radical alternative to life definitionism. *Synthese*, *197*(7), 2975-2989.
* Suggested Reading: Mariscal, C. et al. (2019). Hidden concepts in the history and philosophy of origins-of-life studies: A workshop report. *Origins of Life and Evolution of Biospheres*, *49*, 111-145.

# Week 6: Complexity and Evolution (Guest Lecturer: Dr Tyler Brunet)

* Required Reading: Brunet, T.D.P. Higher level constructive neutral evolution. Biol Philos 37, 23 (2022). [https://doi.org/10.1007/s10539-022-09858-x](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fdoi.org%2F10.1007%2Fs10539-022-09858-x&data=05%7C02%7CC.Alves-Neto%40exeter.ac.uk%7C3e504e684b9840d2fceb08dc1291546a%7C912a5d77fb984eeeaf321334d8f04a53%7C0%7C0%7C638405662584015449%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=sbfqEyNQFTWAjW35dG3Lasl0wn3keIcO4KjhR5r3XqA%3D&reserved=0)
* Suggested Reading: Godfrey-Smith, P. (2001). Three kinds of adaptationism. Adaptationism and optimality, 122.

# Week 7: Pregnancy and Processes

* Required Reading: Meincke, A. S. (2022). One or two? A Process View of pregnancy. *Philosophical Studies*, *179*(5), 1495-1521.
* Suggested Reading: Nicholson, D. J., & Dupré, J. (2018). “Introduction” in *Everything flows: towards a processual philosophy of biology* Oxford University Press.

# Week 8: Species

* Required Reading: Okasha, S. (2002). Darwinian metaphysics: Species and the question of essentialism. *Synthese*, *131*(2), 191-213.
* Suggested Reading: Ereshefsky, M. (2010). What's wrong with the new biological essentialism. *Philosophy of Science*, *77*(5), 674-685.

# Week 9: Human Nature

* Required Reading: Machery, E. (2008). A plea for human nature. *Philosophical Psychology*, *21*(3), 321-329.
* Suggested Reading: Kronfeldner, M., Roughley, N., & Toepfer, G. (2014). Recent work on human nature: Beyond traditional essences. *Philosophy Compass*, *9*(9), 642-652.

# Week 10: Human Races

* Required Reading: Andreasen, R. O. (2000). Race: Biological reality or social construct?. *Philosophy of Science*, *67*(S3), S653-S666.
* Suggested Reading: Glasgow, J. M. (2003). On the new biology of race. *The Journal of Philosophy*, *100*(9), 456-474.

# Week 11: Recap

* *No Required Readings*

# Suggested Reading

The following books offer background and complementary information about the topics of the module:

* Coates, P. (1998) ***Nature: Western Attitudes since Ancient Times***

## Dupre, J. (2021) Metaphysics of Biology

## Godfrey-Smith, P. (2016). Philosophy of biology

* Koyré, A. (1957) ***From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe***
* Sterelny, K. and Griffiths, P. E. (1999) ***Sex and Death***

# Online Resources

* **SEP - Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy** (available through electronic library).
* **The Philosopher's Index**, searchable bibliography (available through electronic library**)**.
* **JSTOR**, searchable repository of scholarly articles (available through electronic library**)**
* **PHILPAPERS,** searchable repository of philosophical articles (online)

# Plagiarism and Misconducts

Cheating or plagiarism on any assignment or examination is regarded as an extremely serious academic offense. These and other acts of misconduct will not be tolerated by the instructor. Suspicious cases of misconduct will lead to an investigation and adequate penalty according to the Teaching Quality Assurance Manual ([12 - Academic conduct and practice - Teaching Quality Assurance Manual - University of Exeter](https://as.exeter.ac.uk/academic-policy-standards/tqa-manual/aph/managingacademicmisconduct/)).