

Spring 2015 Perspectives 2699B: The Historical Basis of the Evolution/Creationism Controversy

College of Arts & Sciences, Valdosta State University

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Office Hours: Monday 2:00-3:00 & Wednesday 11-12:00 or By Appointment. Please feel free to call the office or use email to schedule a convenient time. Anytime I am in my office, you are welcome to stop in to ask quick questions.

Class Meetings: The class will meet once each week for a single block session for the two credit hours, but you will be responsible for watching videos and doing other assignment between classes. Always check the syllabus.

Course Description: An examination of the various issues contributing to the ongoing Evolution/Creationism Controversy. Readings will center on the philosophical aspects of the intersections of religion and science. Class discussion will facilitate open dialog from multiple perspectives. Class presentations will clarify common misunderstandings of biological evolution and show how miscommunications lead to this clash between disparate discourse communities.

Course Objectives: This class satisfies one of the two general education courses required in Section B: Perspectives of the VSU core curriculum as prescribed by the University System of Georgia. The primary emphasis falls under Area 6: Perspectives on Cross-Cultural Understanding & Expression. As part of the core curriculum at VSU, Perspectives courses foster interdisciplinary learning and global awareness. Perspectives courses explore topics that cross disciplinary boundaries with an emphasis on the interaction of two or more disciplines. The goal is the development students' ability to synthesize varying points of view and connect issues that affect individuals within our region with those affecting individuals in other parts of the world.

Learning Outcomes: VSU Area B states that: *Students will demonstrate knowledge of global and regional perspectives in areas such as the arts, humanities, sciences, and social sciences.* The regional perspective will involve the demonstration of how this evolution/creationism controversy is basically an American phenomenon that is particularly contentious in the South. The global perspectives will come from the demonstration of an understanding of the worldwide history of religion and impact this debate can have on other societies around the world.

Academic Honesty: Class members are expected to maintain high standards of integrity. This course will use the VSU Handbook Code of Ethics as a basic standard of behavior, but everyone in the class is required to read the Biology Department Plagiarism Policy and you are expected to sign-off that you understand this document as part of your student information sheet. Dishonesty will not be tolerated and any student misconduct will be reported to the Office of the Dean of Students. Evidence of cheating will result in no credit for the assignment or depending on the case, a grade of "F" for the course. Never copy text from a book or website and represent it as your own work. By taking this course, you agree that all required course work may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to SafeAssign, a tool within BlazeVIEW. For more information on the use of SafeAssign at VSU see SafeAssign for Students (<http://www.valdosta.edu/academic/SafeAssignforStudents.shtml>).

Special Services: Students requiring classroom accommodations or modifications because of a documented disability should discuss this need with me at the beginning of the semester. Students not registered with the Special Services Program should contact the Special Services Office, Farber Hall 1115, 245-2498.

Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act: Grades cannot be posted by Name or Social Security Number. Scores and student work will not be given over the telephone, by email or to another student.

Perspectives 2699B – *Course Objectives*

Essential Question:

Why is there so much social controversy surrounding the Theory of Evolution?

Enduring Understanding:

Recognize how misrepresentation of the Theory of Evolution and the failure to understand the distinction between scientific and religious knowledge has led to the Evolution/Creationism Controversy.

Class Format:

The Evolution/Creationism Controversy is perpetuated by an absence of productive, civil discourse between religious and scientific stakeholders. This course creates an academic space for such a conversation that is based on information from Religion, Science, and a variety of other disciplines including: Anthropology, History, Sociology, Philosophy, Law, Education, & Communication. These sessions will not be endless monologues from the front of the room. Students are encouraged to ask questions and will frequently be asked questions in something of a Socratic dialog.

Assessment:

Participation & Attendance	40%
Weekly Assignments	30%
Term Paper	10%
Midterm Exam	10%
Comprehensive Final Exam	10%

Attendance: Attendance will be taken at every class session. Any absence, regardless of the reason, will reduce the attendance grade by 25% unless a make-up paper is submitted. The Make-up paper will be 1-2 single-spaced pages with 3 references. Students are responsible for getting notes from another student and submitting assignments even when they miss class. Anyone who misses more than 20 percent of the class sessions will receive a failing grade for the course. Emailing the instructor with the reasons for an absence is fine, but please do not ask if something was missed. Assume that it was! The instructor will not provide notes or repeat what happened in class.

Participation: There will be short class presentations in which everyone will be assigned a different topic to present as part of the class discourse. If you miss these, it will hurt your participation grade. We will start a discussion on Blazeview after each class session. Everyone is expected to read these regularly and respond several times to these discussions. Think about what you post before you do it. Concentrate on adding new ideas to these conversations. Finally, active positive participation is expected of all students during class. Everyone is should be involved in the breakout conversations that are part of this course. Consistent and thoughtful contributions will be noted. Individual grades will be penalized for failure to become involved, thoughtless/rude behavior, or anything that detracts from the learning experiences of other students.

Written Assignments: Students will regularly submit a 500-750 word response to an assignment. These entries should be single-spaced, written in first person, and reflective. These will be handed in on Blazeview and will not be accepted late. NO EXCEPTIONS! Grades will be out of 10 points as (10 = Excellent, 8 = Good, 6 = Adequate, <5 = Deficient). If a student misses the description of the assignment in class, it is their responsibility to contact a classmate (Do Not Email the Instructor). At the end of the semester, these assignments will provide the basis for the term paper.

Examinations: The midterm and final will be a combination of multiple choice and essay questions. Do NOT try to memorize the information because questions will probe an understanding of the concepts and not measure rote learning. Students are responsible for all of the information presented in the lectures and anything covered in the course readings. **Your lecture notes are the study guide.** In case of an emergency, the instructor within 24 hours by office phone or by email. Make-up exams will only be given for valid reasons with documented excuses and these will be essay tests that are much more difficult.

Department: Disruptive behavior of will not be tolerated, so please restrict talking and sidebar discussions. Any student disrupting class meetings will be required to leave the classroom and considered absent. Please be on time to class and late people should enter at the back of the room without disturbing the class. The meetings will last the full time and people are expected to be quiet until dismissal by the instructor. Turn off cell phones & pagers before class begins. Class will be stopped for rude behavior including text-messaging or computers being used for anything other than class purposes. If a student causes such a disruption more than once, they will be asked to leave. Repeated problems will result in a reduction of the grade or permanent removal from the course.

Perspectives 2630: Tentative Class Schedule (Subject to Change)

Date	Class Topic	Preparation	Written Evaluation
Jan 14	Mosaic of Quotations Reading of Anonymous Class Responses	Student Information Sheet	Interpretation of the Mosaic
21	Origin Stories Examining Creation Ideas	Research on Origins & Picture Slide	Summary of Conversation
28	Mythos & Logos Interviews - "Does God Mix with Science"	Read & Critique Paper	Analysis of 3 Stages
Feb 4	Nature of Religion	<i>History of God</i> (93 min DVD)	
11	Creationism*** Toulmin Method	Read & Critique Paper	
18	Evolutionary Thought***	Biographies	
25	Nature of Science		
Mar 4	Discussion & Midterm Rel & Sci	http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/evolution-irreducible-complexity/	
11	Evidence for Evolution	<i>Charles Darwin & the Tree of Life</i> (60 min DVD)	
18	Biological Evolution		
25	SPRING BREAK – No Classes		
Apr 1	The <i>Atlas of Creation</i> & EVO Discussion	Video Evaluation	
8	Legal Cases***	Research	
15	International Perspectives***	Research	
22	Dr. Muncy - Why Not Intelligent Design?	Dover Trial News Article & Synopsis	
29	The Future of the Controversy***	Term Paper <i>Expelled</i> & <i>Religulous</i> DVDs Essay from Nazarene Web Site	
May 8	Friday (2:45 - 4:45pm) CUMULATIVE FINAL EXAM		

Writing Guidelines

Objective

These assignments have been designed help you to learn, outside the classroom, through your own writing. Papers are an opportunity to display your knowledge through more than just exams or what you might or might not say in class. These assignments also allow you to show your own style of expression and personal interests, so you should take pride in them.

Focus

Well-crafted writing always has a specific purpose. Every paper should have a distinct thesis or central idea. Your thesis should directly address the nature of the writing assignment. Decide on the topic and a specific case you want to make before you start writing. Write the thesis down and check back throughout the writing process to be certain that the work supports it.

Organization

Before you begin to write, think through how you plan to develop your thesis and use an outline to structure the paper. An Introduction and Conclusion will be the first and last paragraphs of your paper. Start paper with something catchy to interest the reader. Make it perfectly clear, in this introductory section, what your point or central idea will be. Support that concept throughout the body of your paper. Paragraphs in the middle will be the Body of your text. Subheadings are an effective way to support and indicate the organization of longer papers. Any paper over 3 pages probably needs subheadings. Avoid using phrases such as "In this paper I will discuss..." since it is much more sophisticated to avoid this type of "crutch statement."

Paragraphs

Divide the paper by major themes and make each of these a distinct paragraph. You should have at least 3 paragraphs on a 1-page paper. The first sentence of each paragraph is a topic sentence that shows what the paragraph cover. ONE SENTENCE IS NEVER AN ENTIRE PARAGRAPH because there should be at least 3 sentences elaborating any significant idea.

Format

Your papers are to be typed using something comparable to 12-point Times New Roman type, single-spacing, and reasonable (1-1.5 inch) margins. Other professors often expect double-spacing, but to save paper, I require single-spacing. The lengths of these papers are stated in the assignments. After you draft your ideas, if the paper is too long, go back through and shorten it up by taking out the less important aspects. If it is too short, go back and incorporate more support or add more detail to what you are saying. When I say 1 page, that means one sheet of paper that is full of text. Put your references and heading on that sheet. Use the word counting function on your word processor to be sure your text is 600-800 words per assigned page when single-spaced.

Requirements

Each paper should have a creative title identifying the approach to the assignment. For long papers, the title is centered on the title page and followed by the student's name, ID number, and full course information. For short papers, the information should be in the upper right corner and the title should be centered on the first line. That course information should include the name, number, instructor, and the university. Number all pages starting with the first page of the text, but do not number the title page. Staple your papers, do not fold the corner or use a paper clip.

References

Be very careful about giving appropriate credit to the sources of any outside information that you use. You should have properly formatted references at the end of the paper that include: Author (Last name, Initials), Year (In parentheses), Title, Place & Name of Publisher, Pages. Use the APA or American Psychological Association style. For WWWeb sources, use as much information about the author or site along with the WWWeb address. When you include information that is general knowledge, it does not require a citation in the text. If you can find the same information in 2 or 3 books, it does not require a citation in the text. Be sure to reword or paraphrase text from your sources to avoid plagiarism. Paraphrasing means changing more than 1 word in a sentence. Think about what something says and completely restate it in your own words. Avoid making your paper look like a mosaic of other people's ideas by using as few direct quotes as possible. The best idea is to quote someone only when the wording is extremely original and/or it can't be stated differently. A direct quote always requires a citation in the text with the page where the quote was found.

Grading

Short papers will each be worth 10 points and longer assignments will be 100 points. Assignments will be described in detail in class, so listen carefully and be sure that you know what is expected or ask about anything that is unclear. Focus on the objective of the assignment and address it clearly in thesis of your paper. You can dramatically improve your work if you critique your own rough draft and revise it at least once. Outside feedback can also make a difference. Proofread to avoid careless errors. Spelling, Punctuation, and Grammar do effect our impression of the quality of your presentation. These papers will be graded on Effort, Quality, Organization, Content, Proper citations and whether or not you followed these directions. I will look specifically at extent of your coverage of the topic and the clarity in your presentation of the material. Be sure to support general statements and do not use hypothetical examples. Papers are due at the start of class and late work will not be graded.