

PSY 3020: Evolution, Science, and Superstition
Winter, 2018

Instructor

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Course Meeting Time and Location

Tues/Thurs, 3:00pm-4:47pm, 388 MSC

Course Description

Overview of the methods and products of science as contrasted with superstition and supernaturalism, with a focus on Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection, and on the psychological processes that explain scientific and supernatural thinking. Focus on differentiating critical thinking and scientific evidence-based beliefs and practices from beliefs and practices that are not evidence-based and do not depend on critical thinking.

Course Prerequisites: 2.0 or better in PSY 2500

Note: This course was formerly offered as PSY 400: Science and Superstition. Students who took this course under that number and title may not repeat it except for grade improvement.

Required Texts:

1. *On the origin of species [A facsimile of the first edition, published 1859]*, by Charles Darwin. Published in 2001 paperback by Harvard University Press, ISBN-13: 978-0674637528.
2. *The greatest show on Earth: The evidence for evolution*, by Richard Dawkins. Published in 2010 paperback by Free Press, ISBN-13: 978-1416594796.
3. *Faith versus fact: Why science and religion are incompatible*. Published in 2016 paperback by Penguin, ISBN-13: 978-0143108269.
4. *The human predicament: A candid guide to life's biggest questions*, by David Benatar. Published in 2017 hardcover by Oxford University Press, ISBN-13: 978-0190633813.

Course Procedures: *Discussions, lectures, videos, reaction papers, group presentations*

Cross-Cutting Capacities: effective communication, critical thinking

Course Objectives (derived from American Psychological Association guidelines):

1. Respect and use critical and creative thinking, skeptical inquiry, and, when possible, the scientific approach to solve problems related to behavior and mental processes.
2. Understand and apply psychological principles to personal, social, and organizational issues.
3. Value empirical evidence, tolerate ambiguity, act ethically, and reflect other values that are the underpinnings of psychology as a science.
4. Communicate effectively in a variety of formats.

Expectations

Students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner conducive to an environment of academic integrity and respect for the educational process and the safety and wellbeing of all members of the community. Adherence to the Student Code of Conduct will be expected; violations of this code will be reported to the Dean of Students. The Code of Academic and Student Conduct can be found at <http://www2.oakland.edu/deanofstudents/handbook/conduct.cfm>. In addition, students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner conducive to an environment of academic integrity and respect for the educational process and the safety and wellbeing of all members of the community. I reserve the right to limit this course's survey of alternative perspectives to those that, in my professional judgment, meet generally accepted standards of plausibility in the field of scholarship covered in this course. Students are expected to show mastery of these perspectives in their spoken and written contributions.

Add/Drops & Incompletes: The University add/drop and incomplete grade policies will be explicitly followed. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of the University deadline dates for dropping the course.

Make-up Examinations: No make-up coursework is permitted.

Special Considerations: A student with a documented learning or physical disability must contact the **Office of Disability Support Services**, 103A North Foundation Hall, (248) 370-3266, and inform the professor of special needs during first week of classes. For more information, visit <http://www.oakland.edu/dss>

Policy on Academic Misconduct: The University's regulations that relate to academic misconduct will be fully enforced. Any student suspected of cheating and/or plagiarism will be reported to the Dean of Students and, thereafter, to the Academic Conduct Committee for adjudication. Anyone found guilty of academic misconduct in this course may receive a course grade of 0.0, in addition to any penalty assigned by the Academic Conduct Committee. Students found guilty of academic misconduct by the Academic Conduct Committee may face suspension or permanent dismissal. The full policy on academic misconduct can be found in the General Information section of the Undergraduate Catalog.

Excused Absence Policy: University excused absences applies to participation as an athlete, manager or student trainer in NCAA intercollegiate competitions, or participation as a representative of Oakland University at academic events and artistic performances approved by the Provost or designee. For the OU excused absence policy, see <http://www.oakland.edu/provost/policies-and-procedures/>

Audio Recording Policy: Students who wish to audio-record lectures may request permission to do so. These recordings may only be used for the purpose of personal study. Students may not share these recordings with other individuals without the consent of the professor. At the conclusion of the semester, students may request permission to keep these recordings if needed, otherwise it is expected that all audio-recordings will be deleted from all electronic recording and storage devices.

Veteran Support Services: The office of Veteran Support Services (VSS) is responsible for giving support services to more than 300 veterans, service members, and dependents of veterans. VSS is staffed with personnel who are veterans and current or former students. Any student veteran or dependent of a veteran requiring assistance with navigating the Veterans Administration, understanding service-related benefits, or requires referrals to campus and community resources should contact one of the Veterans Liaisons by visiting 116 North Foundation Hall, or phoning 248-370-2010. <http://www.oakland.edu/veterans/>

Departmental Policy for Resolution of Student Academic-Related Concerns: The student has an obligation to attempt to resolve all academic-related concerns with the instructor. If a suitable solution cannot be reached, then the student should consult the Department of Psychology Procedure for the Resolution of Student Academic-Related Concerns at <https://www.oakland.edu/Assets/Oakland/psychology/files-and-documents/Undergrad-Advising/Resolution%20of%20Student%20Concerns-04-2017-approved%20full%20doc.pdf>.

Grade Determination

Grades in this course will be based on evaluations of the following materials:

Presented Discussion Questions

Each class, several students will present several questions for discussion of material presented in the assigned readings or lecture. Each student will present questions for discussion twice, on different days. Grades will be assigned on the basis of the thoughtfulness and clarity of the questions. Each of the two sets of questions is worth 50 points, for a total of 100 points of the total 400 points in the course.

Discussion Questions

Students will hand in at the end of each class 4-5 typed discussion questions about the reading assigned for that class. These questions must be prepared prior to arriving to class. Grades will be assigned on the basis of the degree to which the questions reflect a careful and thoughtful reading of the assigned material. This assignment is worth 100 points out of the total 400 points in the course.

Brief Reaction Papers

Students will complete and turn in a brief (2 pages, 12-point Times New Roman font, 1 inch margins, typed and double-spaced) reaction paper due at the beginning of each Tuesday class session. Unless otherwise requested by the instructor,

these reactions papers should address the readings assigned for the previous week. Grades will be assigned on the basis of the degree to which the reaction papers reflect thoughtful consideration of the issues presented in the readings assigned for that week. This assignment is worth 100 points out of the total 400 points in the course.

Comprehensive Exam

There will be one comprehensive exam, administered on the scheduled final exam date. The exam will consist of short essay questions. Grades will be assigned on the basis of the degree to which the answers reflect a complete and accurate response to the question. This assignment is worth 100 points out of the total 400 points in the course.

Grade Calculation: Your final grade will be calculated as the number of points you achieved across the four assignments out of the total available 400 points. The number of points achieved out of 400 will be converted to a percentage. Grades will then be assigned according to the following scale:

Grading Scale:

95% and above = 4.0

90% - 94% = 3.6 - 3.9

80% - 89% = 3.0 - 3.5

70% - 79% = 2.0 - 2.9

60% - 69% = 1.0 - 1.9

59% and below = 0.0

Detailed Class Schedule

Date	Topic	Reading
Jan 4	Introduction to course, group discussion sign-up	None
Jan 9	<i>Origin</i> , part 1	Darwin: Intro, chap. I
Jan 11	<i>Origin</i> , part 2	Darwin: chap. II, III
Jan 16	<i>Origin</i> , part 3	Darwin: chap. IV
Jan 18	<i>Origin</i> , part 4	Darwin: chap. V
Jan 23	<i>Origin</i> , part 5	Darwin: chap. VI, VII
Jan 25	<i>Origin</i> , part 6	Darwin: chap. VIII, IX
Jan 30	<i>Origin</i> , part 7	Darwin: chap. X
Feb 1	<i>Origin</i> , part 8	Darwin: chap. XI
Feb 6	<i>Origin</i> , part 9	Darwin: chap. XII
Feb 8	<i>Origin</i> , part 10	Darwin: chap. XIII
Feb 13	<i>Origin</i> , part 11	Darwin: chap. XIV
Feb 15	TBA	TBA
Feb 20	No class, Winter recess	None
Feb 22	No class, Winter recess	None
Feb 27	<i>Greatest show</i> , part 1	Dawkins: preface, chap. 1-2
March 1	<i>Greatest show</i> , part 2	Dawkins: chap. 3-4

March 6	<i>Greatest show</i> , part 3	Dawkins: chap. 5
March 8	<i>Greatest show</i> , part 4	Dawkins: chap. 6
March 13	<i>Greatest show</i> , part 5	Dawkins: chap. 7-8
March 15	<i>Greatest show</i> , part 6	Dawkins: chap. 9
March 20	<i>Greatest show</i> , part 7	Dawkins: chap. 10-11
March 22	<i>Greatest show</i> , part 8	Dawkins: chap. 12-13
March 27	<i>Faith vs. fact</i> , part 1	Coyne: preface, pp. 1-63
March 29	<i>Faith vs. fact</i> , part 2	Coyne: pp. 63-124
April 3	<i>Faith vs. fact</i> , part 3	Coyne: pp. 124-196
April 5	<i>Faith vs. fact</i> , part 4	Coyne: pp. 196-263
April 10	<i>The human predicament</i> , part 1	Benatar: preface, reader's guide, chap. 1-3
April 12	<i>The human predicament</i> , part 2	Benatar: chap. 4-5
April 17	<i>The human predicament</i> , part 3	Benatar: chap. 6-8
XXXX	Final exam, 12:00-3:00pm	None