

**Philosophy 3334: Philosophy of Biology
Spring 2016, final Paper Assignment**

Instructions: Write an argumentative paper on some topic that we have discussed in class. The paper should be between 1500 and 2500 words. The paper must critically engage at least some assigned readings from the class. You may wish to read additional material that was not assigned, however, this is not necessary. I would be happy to help you find relevant readings.

Due Date: You must submit your paper to me before by Tuesday, May 17th at 2:00 pm. This is the time of our scheduled final (really 1:30) – but there will be no in-class final exam. I will be in my office (265 G Philosophy) from 12-2 on Tuesday and you can bring it to me then or if you wish to turn it in early, you can try my office first or you may give it to any staff person in the philosophy department's main office in 251 Philosophy if I am not in my office.

Remember that these papers will be graded anonymously so do not write your name on the paper. Instead, just write your R#. If you are a graduating senior, then you should also say “graduating senior” with your R-number.

Grading: This paper will constitute 30% of your final grade.

References: All sources used in the writing of your paper must be properly referenced. This applies to material in the course readings, other published material, lecture notes from this class and other classes, material 'published' on the internet, and ideas contributed verbally by other students. Failure to follow these guidelines may result in a lowered grade or even an automatic F in the course; it may also lead to charges being brought before the university. If you have any questions about these issues, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Topic:

You may choose to write about any topic relevant to our class. But it must actually be relevant to the readings we did and what we talked about in class. For example, a paper arguing that we should believe that there is intelligent life somewhere in the universe is in some sense relevant to the philosophy of biology, but it is not relevant to our class and you would receive a failing grade.

If you are not sure if your chosen topic is relevant, ask me. Here are some sample topics that are relevant and questions at the right level of generality for this paper:

- 1) How should we think about Nature vs. Nurture? Is there such a thing as Human Nature? What is it?
- 2) Is thinking about evolution important for understanding human behavior? How? When studying human behavior, when is it appropriate to study humans in the same way we would study animals and when would that be inappropriate?
- 3) Is morality innate? What does this question even mean?
- 4) Are sex differences innate? Which differences?
- 5) Are human races real? Are they socially constructed?