

Philosophy 3334: Philosophy of Biology
Spring 2016
Fifth short essay assignment

Please print your essay and bring it to class on Tuesday, April 19th. **ALSO** please make your essay anonymous by putting your R# at the top of the page and **NOT** your name.

You are to write roughly one page (400-600 words) on something broadly within the topic of biology and social behavior.

This is an argumentative paper. You must defend some particular thesis. A good paper is clear, easy to read, and provides good arguments for its conclusion. But exactly what you write about is quite open ended. You might discuss something that doesn't have much to do with humans (how to carefully define reciprocal altruism in terms of biological fitness), something about why or how humans play the prisoner's dilemma or the stag hunt, something about what altruism, morality, or innateness really means, etc.

If you like following prompts, here are some choices for you:

1) Someone might ask if morality is a part of human nature. What exactly does this question mean? Does "part of human nature" mean "innate" in the way that Prinz is talking about or is there some important difference? Could moral behavior be "natural" in this sense even though there seems to be a lot of moral disagreement across the globe?

2) Levy says that evolved morality is real morality. Is it?

3) Prinz cites examples that he thinks constitute a kind of moral disagreement across the globe. No doubt you can think of many more kinds of examples. Do these examples show that morality is not innate like Prinz thinks? Is this kind of disagreement consistent with what Levy says about the evolution of morality?

4) Godfrey-Smith, Dawkins, and Levy are looking at a lot of non-human cases to try to understand the evolution of pro-social behaviors in other creatures. Then they link various results to human behavior in various cases. But what can the evolution of sterile castes in insects (for example) possibly tell us about cooperative and moral behavior in humans? Are these just fundamentally different kinds of things?