

The Design Argument

School & Term: Notre Dame, Fall 1996

Course: Philosophy 261, Section 04

Meeting Time: 5:00-6:15pm, TH

Meeting Place: 205A O'Shaughnessy

Instructor: Bill Dembski

Office: 302 Decio Hall

Telephone: 631-5138

Office Hours: TBA

Required Texts: Michael Denton, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*; Charles Darwin, *Origin of Species*; William Paley, *Natural Theology*; David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*; Thomas Reid, *Lectures on Natural Theology*; Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods*; Michael Behe, *Darwin's Black Box*; Phillip Johnson, *Reason in the Balance*. We shall also read a few photocopied articles.

Related Texts: Peter Bowler, *Evolution: The History of an Idea*, revised edition (Univ. of Calif., 1989); Percival Davis & Dean Kenyon, *Of Pandas and People*, 2nd edition (Houghton, 1993); Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker* (Norton, 1987); Phillip Johnson, *Darwin on Trial* (IVP, 1991); Jacques Monod, *Chance and Necessity* (Vintage, 1971); J. P. Moreland, *The Creation Hypothesis* (IVP, 1994); Ronald Numbers, *The Creationists: The Evolution of Scientific Creationism* (Knopf, 1992); John Sailhamer, *Genesis Unbound* (Multnomah, 1996); Elliott Sober, *Philosophy of Biology* (Westview, 1993); Charles Thaxton et al., *The Mystery of Life's Origin* (Philosophical Library, 1984).

Course Description: When we look at the bio-physical universe, what do we see? Do we see the product of an awesome intelligence or do we see the product of blind forces of nature? The patterns, the order, and the complexity we see in nature—have they arisen spontaneously or have they been imparted by an intelligent agent? And how could we ever tell the difference? These are the questions that underlie this course and to which we shall return repeatedly. We shall be particularly interested in Darwin and biology. As the contemporary Darwinist Richard Dawkins puts it, "Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist." Whereas God was once thought indispensable for understanding the universe, with Darwin we have come to regard the universe as silent about God's existence. Has the universe indeed fallen silent about God's existence or does it still proclaim God's design? This course will attempt to answer this question.

Day to Day Mechanics: This will be a reading and discussion course. What lecturing I do will serve mainly to frame our discussions. Readings are assigned in class. I expect you to have thoroughly engaged the assigned readings. Ideally, you should be prepared to **summarize** the day's reading, pick out its **key concepts**, state its **key claim(s)** and **supporting arguments**, note these arguments' **strengths** and **weaknesses**, and identify the **unanswered questions** raised by the text. I will call on people at will. Always bring the text of the assigned reading to class.

Requirements: (1) Diligent reading of assigned texts as demonstrated through class participation and quizzes—20% of the grade; (2) A major paper approximately 6000 words in length (no less than 5500, no more than 7000)—50% of the grade; (3) A final exam—30% of the grade.

The Paper: Your paper is due Thursday, December 5, 1996, in class. The paper will examine whether the design argument remains a legitimate intellectual enterprise in our own day. You are to take sides, either for or against the design argument, and make your best case.

Full name

How would you like to be addressed in class?

Are you registered?

What is your major?

What philosophy courses have you taken?

What religion courses have you taken?

What science courses have you taken?

Favorite books

Favorite movies

Favorite quote

Reason for taking this course