

SCIENTIFIC THINKING IN ECOLOGY (FAS 5901, Section 1289, 2 credits)

Fall Semester 2014

Classroom Section: Tuesdays, Periods 10-11 (5:10 – 7:05 p.m.) in Newins-Zeigler 219

Online Section: TBA

Course Description:

This course examines general philosophical foundations of science, the nature of scientific disputes, and the relevance of these to ecology. Assigned readings, class discussions and essays provide background, tools, opportunities and feedback designed to help students deliberately develop their professional philosophy. *Prerequisite: One ecology course.*

Course Goals:

1. To foster critical thinking while developing each student's scientific philosophy.
2. To enable students to recognize philosophical differences among scientists, particularly ecologists.
3. To help students place ecological science in the context of intellectual pursuits and human nature.
4. To make explicit for students the foundations of public trust in ecology as a science.

Expected Outcomes:

Upon completion of this course, successful graduate students will be able to:

- A. Distinguish ecology from other endeavors and better identify "good" science
- B. Formulate and deliver higher quality verbal and written arguments
- C. Demonstrate an ability to learn from other fields
- D. Interact effectively as a part of a team exploring important issues

Format, Evaluation and Feedback:

Weekly class discussions with Socratic questioning will derive from assigned readings. Students may be asked to lead the weekly discussions. Three essays will be assigned and due as scheduled. Essays will be evaluated by the instructor for critical thinking and intellectual standards, as reviewed at the beginning of the course and throughout the discussions. Regular attendance and participation are expected as discussions cannot be "made up." Class participation will be reinforced and assessed by student blogs written after each discussion. Blogs will be accepted from students absent from discussions due to illness. Everyone is expected to read everyone else's blog prior to the next class period; posting comments is encouraged. Essays will be compiled and posted for review.

Grading:	Class participation	55% (~3.6 pts/class)
	3 Essays @ 15 pts each	<u>45%</u>
	Total	100%

A = 90-100%,
B = 80-89
C = 70-79
D = 60-69
E = 59 or less

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Office Hours Almost Anytime by Appointment

Textbook: Most, **though not all**, reading materials are online at <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/>

Grades and Grade Points

For information on current UF policies for assigning grade points, see <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Academic Honesty, Software Use, Campus Helping Resources, Services for Students with Disabilities

Academic Honesty

In 1995 the UF student body enacted an [honor code](#) and voluntarily committed itself to the highest standards of honesty and integrity. When students enroll at the university, they commit themselves to the standard drafted and enacted by students.

The Honor Pledge: We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.

On all work submitted for credit by students at the university, the following pledge is either required or implied: **"On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."**

Students should report any condition that facilitates dishonesty to the instructor, department chair, college dean, Student Honor Council, or Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution in the Dean of Students Office. (*Source: 2012-2013 Undergraduate Catalog*)

It is assumed all work will be completed independently unless the assignment is defined as a group project, in writing by the instructor. This policy will be vigorously upheld at all times in this course.

Software Use:

All faculty, staff and students of the university are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against university policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.

Campus Helping Resources

Students experiencing crises or personal problems that interfere with their general well-being are encouraged to utilize the university's counseling resources. The Counseling & Wellness Center provides confidential counseling services at no cost for currently enrolled students. Resources are available on campus for students having personal problems or lacking clear career or academic goals, which interfere with their academic performance.

- *University Counseling & Wellness Center, 3190 Radio Road, 352-392-1575, www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/*
 - Counseling Services
 - Groups and Workshops
 - Outreach and Consultation
 - Self-Help Library
 - Training Programs
 - Community Provider Database
- *Career Resource Center, First Floor JWRU, 392-1601, www.crc.ufl.edu/*

Services for Students with Disabilities

The Disability Resource Center coordinates the needed accommodations of students with disabilities. This includes registering disabilities, recommending academic accommodations within the classroom, accessing special adaptive computer equipment, providing interpretation services and mediating faculty-student disability related issues.

0001 Reid Hall, 352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/

Topics and Assignments for FAS 5901 – Fall Semester 2014

<u>Date¹</u> <u>Week</u>	<u>Topics</u>	<u>Readings² and Assignments</u>
8/26 1	Course goals, outcomes, evaluation and feedback Critical Thinking and Intellectual Standards	Paul & Elder. 2001. 19 pp. (Elder & Paul. 2008. 72 pp.)
<u>Section I: Why ponder science as an ecologist?</u>		
9/2 2	Why study science <i>per se</i> ? What is the aim of science? What is the aim of ecology?	Rigler & Peters. 1995. Ch.1, pp. 5-20. Peters. 1991. Ch. 2. pp. 17-37. (Ludwig et al. 1993)
9/9 3	Distinguishing science (ecology) and religion	Barbour. 1997. Ch. 1-3. pp. 3-74 (Hilborn 2006)
<u>Section II: Applying Philosophy to Ecology</u>		
9/16 4	Popper’s Contribution	Popper <i>in</i> Boyd et al. 1995. pp. 98-119.
9/23 5	Strong inference & multiple working hypotheses	Chamberlin. 1890. Platt. 1964.
9/30 6	Paradigms and Scientific Revolutions	<u>Kuhn. 1970. 210 pp.</u>
10/7 7	Lakatos’ Scientific Research Programs	<i>In</i> Lakatos & Musgrave 1970 pp. 91-196
10/14 8	Feyerabend’s Anarchism	<i>In</i> Lakatos & Musgrave 1970 pp.197-230 (<i>In</i> Motterlini 1999 pp.113-118)
10/21 9	Case Study: <i>Night Comes to the Cretaceous</i>	<u>Powell. 1998. 325 pp.</u>
10/28 10	A “Kuhnian” looks at Ecology	Cooper 2003. Ch. 2, pp. 27-74 (Introduction, Ch.1, 3 & 5)
11/4 11	Ecologists look to Philosophy	<u>Reiners & Lockwood 2010.</u> Ch. 2-4, pp. 9-77
11/11 12	No Class – Veterans Day	
11/18 13	Constrained Perspectivism or Ecological Critical Thinking	<u>Reiners & Lockwood 2010.</u> Ch. 5-8, pp. 78-116
<u>Section III: Influences of Beliefs and Values</u>		
11/25 14	Professional ethics, a transition to case studies	Peach <i>in</i> Penslar 1995. pp. 13-26. (Segerstrale. 2000. Ch. 1, pp.1-9)
12/2 15	Case Study: <i>Defenders of the Truth</i>	Segerstrale. 2000. Ch.11, pp. 215-234, Ch. 19, pp. 373-390 (Ch. 14, pp. 275-294)
12/9 16	Case Study: <i>Finding Darwin’s God</i>	Miller 1999. Ch. 3-5, pp. 57-164
12/15	Final Exam = 3rd Essay Due on Monday, December 15th by 5:30 PM	

¹ Dates are for the classroom section; the online section might “meet” on a different day of the same week

² Readings in parentheses are recommended, not required. For longer reading assignments, you can read pertinent sections, while skipping or only skimming other sections of the text. Readings in **Bold & Underlined** are not on the course website.

References and Reading List

- Barbour, I.G. 1997. *Religion and Science: Historical and Contemporary Issues*. HarperCollins, San Francisco. 368pp.
- Boyd, R. P. Gasper and J.D. Trout. 1995. *The Philosophy of Science*. MIT Press, Cambridge. 800 pp.
- Chamberlin, T.C. 1890 (reprinted 1965). The method of multiple working hypotheses. *Science* 148:754-759.
- Cooper, G.J. 2003. *The Science of the Struggle for Existence: On the Foundations of Ecology*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 319 pp.
- Elder, L. and R. Paul. 2008. *The Thinker's Guide to Intellectual Standards: The Words that Name Them and the Criteria that Define Them*. Foundation for Critical Thinking, Dillon Beach CA. 72 pp.
- Feyerabend, P.K. 1978. *Against Method: Outline of an Anarchist Theory of Knowledge*. Verso, London. 339 pp.
- Hilborn, R. 2006. Faith-based fisheries. *Fisheries* 31:554-555.
- Keller, D.R. and F.B. Golley. 2000. *The Philosophy of Ecology: From Science to Synthesis*. University of Georgia Press, Athens. 366 pp.
- Kuhn, T.S. 1970. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. (2nd Ed.) Univ. of Chicago Press, Chicago. 210 pp.
- Lakatos, I. 1978. *The Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes*. Cambridge University Press, New York. 250 pp.
- Lakatos, I., and A. Musgrave (eds). 1970. *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*. Cambridge Univ. Press, New York. 282 pp.
- Ludwig, D., R. Hilborn and C. Walters. 1993. Uncertainty, resource exploitation and conservation: Lessons from history. *Science* 260:17+36.
- Miller, D. (ed.). 1985. *Popper Selections*. Princeton Univ. Press, Princeton. 479 pp.
- Miller, K. R. 1999. *Finding Darwin's God*. HarperCollins, New York. 338 pp.
- Motterlini, M. (ed.). 1999. *For and Against Method*. Univ. of Chicago Press, Chicago. 451 pp.
- Paul, R. and L. Elder. 2001. *The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking: Concepts and Tools*. Foundation for Critical Thinking, Dillon Beach CA. 19 pp.
- Penslar, R.L. 1995. *Research Ethics: Cases and Materials*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington. 278 pp.
- Peters, R.H. 1991. *A Critique for Ecology*. Cambridge Univ. Press, New York. 366 pp.
- Pickett, S.T.A., J. Kolasa, C.G. Jones. 1994. *Ecological Understanding*. Academic Press, San Diego. 206 pp.
- Platt, J.R. 1964. Strong inference. *Science* 146:347-353.
- Popper, K.R. 1959 (reprinted 1992). *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*. Routledge, New York. 480 pp.
- Powell, J.L. 1998. *Night Comes to the Cretaceous: Dinosaur Extinction and the Transformation of Modern Geology*. W.H. Freeman & Co. 325 pp.
- Reiners, W.A. and J.A. Lockwood. 2010. *Philosophical Foundations for the Practices of Ecology*. Cambridge Univ. Press, New York. 212 pp.
- Rigler, F.H. and R. H. Peters. 1995. *Science and Limnology*. Ecology Inst., Oldendorf/Luhe, Germany. 239 pp.
- Segerstrale, U. 2000. *Defenders of the Truth: The Battle for Science in the Sociobiology Debate and Beyond*. Oxford Univ. Press, Oxford. 493 pp.