

**Philosophy 2330: Science and Society**  
**Fall 2018, Long Paper Assignment**

**Instructions:** Write an argumentative paper on some topic relevant to our discussion of evolution and ethics in class. The paper should be between roughly 1500 and 2000 words. If you double space and have natural fonts and margins, this would be about 6-8 pages.

The paper must critically engage at least some assigned readings from the class. If you talk about a topic and one of our readings in class directly discusses that topic, you must discuss it. For example, if you claim that evolution shows that morality is an illusion and so there is no such thing as objective moral truth, you must engage Levy's argument to the contrary. You may wish to read additional material that was not assigned, however, this is not necessary and not expected. But if you want to do that, I would be happy to help you find relevant readings.

**Due Date:** This paper is due in class on Monday, November 19th (before Thanksgiving). However, there will be no questions asked and no late penalty if the paper is turned in on Monday, November 26th (after Thanksgiving). If you feel that you can write a better paper utilizing your time over the Thanksgiving break, you may do so. However, I want to warn you that from my own personal experience as a student, my second-hand experiences with friends, and my years of experience as a teacher, students very often believe that they will be able to accomplish great things with all of their free-time over holidays and this is very often not the case. So please be careful in this regard.

Remember that these papers will be graded anonymously so do not write your name on the paper. Instead, just write your R#.

**Grading:** This paper will constitute 20% of your final grade.

**References:** All sources used in the writing of your paper must be properly referenced. Now that you are writing a longer paper dealing with issues discussed in multiple places in our class, it is more important to be careful in this regard. "Properly referenced" does not mean that there is any particular format that I care about, but it does mean that if you say "according to Levy" or have a formal or informal quote referring to something one of our authors wrote, I should be able to very easily find exactly what they did say. So page numbers are essential for example. Since the Rosenberg piece doesn't have them (I just exported the .epub file to a pdf), use the PDF page.

**Topic:**

You may choose to write about any topic relevant to science and ethics. For example, if you wish to take a previous short essay you wrote in class and expand on it, that is fine. Though often if you try to take something short and to the point and expand it, it will go badly. The most natural thing to do (and probably the easiest) is to take two of our authors who disagree on some point, explain each of their views carefully, and then critically join in the debate by giving a further argument in favor of one of them and/or against one of them. For example, here are some natural topics:

- 1) Levy argues that evolution can give us the moral emotions and even the very concept of morality and that this is enough for objectivity. Clark agrees that evolution can get us started along this path, but argues that there is so much more to morality. Who is right here?

- 2) Sober argues that moving from descriptive facts about how evolution works and even why we believe the things we do can never give us normative facts such as whether beliefs are justified. He calls this Hume's thesis. Levy argues that evolution can do just that and that Hume's thesis (which he calls Hume's law) is not correct. I suspect he thinks his example of color perception shows just that. Who is right?
- 3) Rosenberg, along Richard Joyce and Michael Ruse (who Levy mention) think that our moral sentiments are just our genes acting selfishly giving us a kind of illusion of objectivity. Levy agrees that morality is the product of our selfish genes and that it is even a kind of illusion but that it can still be objectively correct. Who is right?
- 4) Rosenberg just seems to assume that objective facts are independent of us. Levy thinks that moral facts are objective but that they do depend on us. How would Sober classify Levy's view? As subjective? Objective? If objective, then it is a kind of realism? Or conventionalism? Why?

If you are not sure if your chosen topic is relevant, ask me.