EVOLUTION AND CREATIONISM
An Unnecessary Controversy
With Josh Cousins and Pastor Patricia
Who Am I?

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Course Layout and Schedule

• Week 1-Dismantling the false dichotomy of religion and science
  • Evolution, atheism and religion
  • Demographic distribution
  • A brief history of American Fundamentalism and the anti-evolution movement

• Week 2-Further Creationist Confusions
  • Evolution as a fraud or conspiracy
  • Creation Science
  • Teach the Controversy

• Week 3-Science
  • Scientific methods and assumptions
  • Theories and hypotheses
  • Absolute truth
Week 4 - The Theory of Evolution
- Evidence for evolution
- Basic principles
- The mechanisms

If interest continues, I will gladly be available to continue this course after the fourth week to further explore any topics you felt were not covered fully or aspects of the course which you would like more detail in.
Goals of this Course

• To effectively dismantle some of the biggest falsehoods of the creationist movement
• Further understanding of the evolutionary process and science in general
• Ease tensions, confusions and concerns about evolution in terms of philosophy and theology
• Explain why evolution is such a well established theory in science and why it is important both in science and in society
Unfortunately, this is how the brain works:

Sir! We are receiving information that conflicts with the core belief system!

Get rid of it.
The False Dichotomy

Psalm 11:3
The False Dichotomy

- Means to give the impression of only two options when in reality that is not the case
- Either atheist evolutionist or Christian creationist
- One of the strongest selling points creationist promoters have tried to endorse
- Self-labeled as the leaders of Christian thoughts on this issue
- Ignores both demographic statistics as well as theological evidence
- In the scientific community, 95% of scientists believe in evolution with 40% also believing in a personal God
- World wide, most Christians are evolutionists and most evolutionists are Christian
- Worldwide, most creationists are either Muslim or Hindu
"Yes, evolution by descent from a common ancestor is clearly true. If there was any lingering doubt about the evidence from the fossil record, the study of DNA provides the strongest possible proof of our relatedness to all other living things." - Francis Collins

Physician-geneticist
Leads the Human Genome Project
Opposes both Intelligent Design and Creationism
Evangelical Christian
Founded BioLogos Foundation
Dr. Robert T. Bakker
- Outspoken proponent of evolution
- PhDs from Harvard and Yale
- One of the world’s leading Paleontologist
- Pentecostal Preacher
- “To treat the Bible as though it were common history is to degrade its eternal meaning”—Bones, Bibles and Creation

Dr. Kenneth Miller
Microbiologist
Testified against Intelligent Design in Kitzmiller Vs Dover Catholic
Nothing in biology makes sense except in the light of evolution.

(Theodosius Dobzhansky)
GOD THROWS THE CREATIONISTS A CURVE...

LET THERE BE EVOLUTION.
The Catholic Church and Evolution

• The Catholic Church has issued statements of compatibility of evolution with religious thinking (Catholics comprise just over half of all Christians worldwide).

• “They are presented as alternatives that exclude each other. This clash is an absurdity because on one hand there is much scientific proof in favor of evolution which appears as a reality we must see and which enriches our understanding of life and being as such”- Pope Benedict XVI

• He further explained that evolution does not answer everything (nor is it intended to do so) “Above all it does not answer the greatest philosophical question ‘Where does everything come from?’”-Pope Benedict XVI

• The Catholic Church has voiced support for evolution since the 1950s
Further False Dichotomies

• With the definition of evolution as a purely atheistic explanation, creationists expect it to account for many things which the theory is not capable of explaining nor was ever intended to such as:
  • Origin of Life (Abiogenesis Theory)
  • Origin of the Universe (Big Bang Theory)
  • Guide to Morality (Philosophy)
  • Why anything is here at all (Philosophy)
  • How could this all be here by chance? (Assumes evolution cannot be guided by God)
• Evolution requires life to exist before it can act on it so naturally it cannot explain the origins of life. We do have many promising hypotheses for the origins of life however and some fascinating work is being done right now to try and determine the mechanism but this again does not dispel God, why can He not work through natural processes and create life by one of those processes?
• Evolution only describes what is and not what should be i.e. is not a moral guide
• Evolution does not dispel God anymore than understanding how weather systems form or how the planets orbit. It is merely a mechanism by which a natural process occurs.
Further False Dichotomies

• Even if creationists succeeded in disproving evolution that would not prove creationism
• Assumes these are the only two possible options (false dichotomy)
• Indeed, if disproving evolution did prove creationism, then why not the creationism of the Hindu religion or of the ancient Greeks?
• In order to vindicate their position they cannot just disprove evolution but provide positive evidence for their positive claim
• This idea will be further explored next week in the discussion about creation science as well as in week 3 with the discussion about science in general
The Controversy as Uniquely American

- Scientific world leaders yet about 41% of its public rejects evolution outright.
- Recall, 95% of the American Scientific community and more than 99% of those in the Life Sciences embrace evolution.
- Why is it that this scientific theory is so resisted in the United States but not nearly so much as in equally and even lesser scientifically notable nations?
American Christian Fundamentalism
A Brief History

• Started in the 1920’s as a religious movement in the Northern United States to combat Biblical criticism and Modernism
  • Insisted upon Biblical literalism and inerrancy to combat Higher criticism
  • Cultural trends were heading towards secularism and modernizing religion to come into line with new ideas and discoveries (Liberal Theology)
  • Fundamentalism emphasized keeping religion traditional and *The Fundamentals* (a series of 90 essays, 1910-1915) were published to preserve protestant beliefs by outlining what the authors took to be fundamental ideas in Christianity including:
    • Virgin birth
    • Deity of Christ
    • Biblical Inerrancy
    • A literal reading of Genesis
Anti-evolution Movement

• Although evolution was a concern for the fundamentalist movement, it was not initially a priority as the changing social and cultural tides in the North presented a more imminent threat.

• Their anti-evolution stance became important in order to bring the movement to the South, where conservative views had prevented Fundamentalism from taking hold.

• The Scopes trial proved to be the perfect opportunity to voice their anti-evolution position and it proved to be more of a media event than a trial. Indeed, its fame is often attributed to the drama it encompassed.

• During the depression though, the anti-evolution movement practically died out in the public and was restricted to fundamentalist church activities (Most at the time viewed the Scopes trial as ending the anti-evolution movement).

• With public and institutional interest practically dead, the anti-evolution movement focused on building an institutional base of their own.
Anti-evolution Movement

• Continuing through the 30’s and 40’s, the movement went covert and concentrated efforts on reducing the prevalence of evolution in small town and rural schools. More often than not, they were successful and a 1942 National survey found less than half of all High school teachers were treating the subject at all.

• Starting in 1963, the National Science foundation reviewed and revamped science education, providing materials to deal with controversial issues such as evolution.

• At roughly the same time, anti-evolution laws were being challenged by teachers and in 1968 Arkansas’s anti-evolution law was found to be unconstitutional

• This combined to create a strong opposition against anti-evolution and activists were forced onto the defensive, leading to the resurgence of creationism in the 1960’s
The Modern Creationist Movement

- The 1960’s were the birth years of the modern creationist movement. With science receiving unprecedented public support, anti-evolutionists had to embrace it.
- Henry Morris, a professor of civil engineering, believed creationism to be provable by science and led the charge in attempting to prove it. He is often accredited as being the father of the modern creation science.
- Though his claims were rejected by scientists and theologians alike the public was very receptive leading to books, videos, museums and numerous debates.
- The 1970’s saw equal time legislation (in which creationism was taught alongside evolution. The first was Tennessee in 1973.
  - Based on the idea that evolution was inherently atheistic and therefore unconstitutional to teach without a Christian alternative.
The Modern Creationist Movement

• Equal time laws in Tennessee were repealed in 1975 once it was shown that evolution was in no way religious or atheistic.

• Creationist tactics shifted then to attacking evolution as bad science and promoting creationism as a scientific alternative.

• However, MacLean Vs Arkansas Board of Education (1982) not only found evolution not to be religious but also creationism not to be science and so overturned it’s equal time law.

• 1980s saw the birth of the Secular Humanist conspiracy by the anti-evolution movement.

  • Another attempt to brand evolution as a religion, it was blamed for all manner of societal ills such as abortion, homosexuality and the loss of the Panama Canal. Although weak legally, it proved to be effective politically and tied connections to the New Christian Right political movement.

  • Evolution had already been blamed for Social Darwinism in the 1920’s and for all modern immorality by Morris in the 1960s. It was no stretch to blame both for every conceivable evil present in their society.

• Evolution was now, not an issue of theology or science but of morality.
The Modern Creationist Movement

• Together, the growing conservative politics and Televangelists gave opportunity to expand the creationist movement to mass audiences

• But the relationship with the conservative political movement meant evolution was often pushed to the sides in favor of more pressing concerns like abortion and homosexuality

• 1990’s saw a conservative political retreat and a stand still for the creationist movement. Unable to disentangle creation science from its religious roots, Phillip E Johnson, an Evangelical Professor at Berkley’s Boalt Hall Law School suggested moving from defensive to offensive and attack evolution.

• By chipping away at evolution, doubt could be cast both on its mechanisms as well as its presuppositions (Naturalism)

• Find cracks in the theory and apply pressure, dubbed “the wedge” strategy by Johnson

• Led to the uprising of Intelligent Design in the 90’s and early 2000’s
Intelligent Design (ID)

- First proposed in 1980’s, it held that certain living organisms were too complex to have been the product of evolution
  - Irreducible Complexity
  - Specified Complexity
  - Fine-Tuned Universe
  - Intelligent Designer
  - Championed by Michael Behe (Biochemist) and William Dembski (Mathematician and Philosopher)
- Remained agnostic towards nature and identity of designer but only in court. Openly professed the identity as the Christian God when out of court (Dembski especially)
- Merely replaced God with “intelligent cause” and creation with “abrupt appearance” or “initial complexity”
- But unlike creationism, ID didn’t have to propose any theories of its own (eg Flood Geology) only pointed to problems with evolution (“the wedge” strategy)
Kitzmiller Vs Dover (2005)

- Challenged the public policy of teaching of Intelligent Design as an alternative to evolution with Of Pandas and People as the Biology textbook (an Intelligent Design textbook)
- Found intelligent Design to be of religious nature and a form of creationism, Of Pandas and People to have contained outdated and flawed science and the secular purposes claimed by the ID movement being merely a pretext for the real purpose of teaching religion in schools
Why Does It All Matter?

Professional Organizations: Yes
On Ohio’s “Critical Analysis” Model Lesson

Source: Americans United for Separation of Church & State
www.au.org
Further Reading and Resources

• The Twelve Foundational Falsehoods of Creationism: Episode 1-Evolution as Atheism.
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KnJX68ELbAY

Fundamentalism Since the 1970s: An In-Depth Article. Charles Armstrong

Dr Kenneth Miller on Intelligent Design
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d4r2J6Y5AqE

Dr Neil Degrasse Tyson on Intelligent Design
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ASmQmYX-71Q

• Wikipedia Articles
  • Kitzmiller Vs Dover Trial
    http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kitzmiller_Vs_Dover#Closing_arguments
  • Scopes Trial
    http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scopes_trial
  • Christian Fundamentalism
  • Intelligent Design
    http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intelligent_design
  • A History of the Creation-Evolution Controversy
    http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_creation%25E2%2580%2593evolution_controversy#The_current_controversy
References

• In *The Beginning: Fundamentalism, The Scopes Trial, and the Making of the Antievolutionary Movement*. By Lienesch Michael

• Fundamentalism Since the 1970s: An In-Depth Article. Charles Armstrong

• *Fundamentalism and American Culture* By George M. Marsden

• *The Battle for God, A History of Fundamentalism* By Karen Armstrong

• The Twelve Foundational Falsehoods of Creationism-By Aron-Ra