

Philosophy 2000 (2017) Essay Questions.

For the first essay in this course, students are expected to reconstruct and analyse a single argument. Guidelines on how to write these papers are provided in a [separate handout](#). Please make sure to follow those guidelines closely. Your paper can be on any one of the topics below.

Essays are to be submitted electronically using Dropbox by 1:00 pm of March 03.

1. In Long Reach of the Gene (Chapter 13), Dawkins presents an argument for why “natural selection has allowed the cuckoos to get away with it” (p.322). That is, why haven’t reed-warbler genes evolved the ability to recognize and eject these conspicuous parasites from their nests? In your essay, please reconstruct and analyse Dawkins’ argument in this part of the chapter.
2. In Long Reach of the Gene (Chapter 13), Dawkins recasts the debate over levels of selection as a debate about vehicles. He states that, “The rivalry between individual organism and groups of organisms for the vehicle role, being a real rivalry, can be settled. As it happens the outcome, in my view, is a decisive victory for the individual organism” (p. 329). In your essay, please reconstruct and analyse Dawkins’ argument in this section.
3. In their “Spandrels” paper, Gould and Lewontin describe the Adaptationist Programme as suffering from a kind of falsifiability problem. Specifically, in Section 2 of their paper they argue that it is a flawed scientific strategy to begin with the hypothesis that a given trait is an adaptation. In your essay, please reconstruct and analyse the argument presented in this section of their paper.