

Study Questions for Midterm ID Primer, Course #28677

This midterm will draw from class discussions as well as from the following three books:

Denyse O’Leary, *By Design or by Chance?*
William Dembski, *Intelligent Design*
Dembski & Kushiner, *Signs of Intelligence*

1. What is design? What does it mean to explain something as resulting from design as opposed to from chance and necessity? What is chance? What is necessity?
2. What is intelligent design? How is it a scientific theory? Why is the word “intelligent” put in front of “design”? In the current climate of controversy, why isn’t this use of “intelligent” in front of “design” redundant? How does “intelligent design” differ from “optimal design”? Does intelligent design have philosophical and theological implications? Does evolution likewise have such implications? Explain.
3. How do cosmological, chemical, and biological evolution differ? Why is the most controversy connected with biological evolution? Why is design in cosmology more acceptable than it is in biology? What sorts of arguments are made to support design in cosmology? What sorts of counterarguments are made against design in cosmology (see O’Leary, ch. 2)?
4. Briefly outline Darwin’s theory of evolution (contrast the pattern of evolution in natural history with the mechanism of evolution). What are some of the scientific problems with this theory? Is this theory reconcilable with Christian theism? Explain.
5. Denyse O’Leary quotes Hans Halvorson as stating that “the most important question for any society to ask is the one that is forbidden”? Is Halvorson correct? What are the forbidden question(s) in connection with the controversy over biological evolution?
6. Is intelligent design testable? Is Darwinian evolution testable? How could these theories be tested?
7. How does ID differ from creationism? What are the connections? Does ID require a young earth? Does it require an old earth? Can one be an ID proponent and embrace a young earth? Why or why not? Can one be an ID proponent and embrace Darwin’s theory of evolution? Why or why not?
8. Describe how ID purports to detect design, i.e., what is its method of design detection? What is the explanatory filter? In this connection, define *specified complexity* and show how the explanatory filter is used to identify whether an event exhibits specified complexity.

9. Why is it significant for the theory of intelligent design to have a method of design detection? What if it had no such method? Could ID still be a scientific theory? Explain.
10. What is naturalism? How does metaphysical naturalism differ from methodological naturalism? Is the opposite of naturalism supernaturalism? Explain.
11. Who were Schleiermacher and Spinoza? What was their argument against miracles? Evaluate their argument (see my book *Intelligent Design*, ch. 2).
12. Describe the various views on the relation between science and theology (see my book *Intelligent Design*, ch. 7). Which view do you think works best? Explain your answer (you don't have to agree with the view I advocate).
13. What is the God of the Gaps? How is this argument used against ID? Evaluate the argument and show why it does or does not succeed.
14. What is dysteleology? Why do you think dysteleology poses such an obstacle to the acceptance of intelligent design by the mainstream intellectual community?
15. What is information? Describe the fundamental intuition underlying information (see the quote of Robert Stalnaker on p. 154 of my book *Intelligent Design*). How is intelligent design a theory of information -- what is the connection between information and the method of design detection encapsulated in the explanatory filter?
16. Summarize the Scopes trial and its significance for today's debate about evolution. Who technically won the Scopes trial? Was the Scopes trial in fact a victory for evolution? Explain. (See O'Leary, ch. 7)
17. What is the Cambrian Explosion? Why does it pose a challenge to evolutionary theory? (See Dembski & Kushiner, ch. 11.)
18. In Bruce Gordon's article (ch. 14 of Dembski & Kushiner), Gordon outlines three models of scientific explanation. What are they? Is ID compatible with those models (see pp. 209-211)? Given these models, is it fair to say that design constitutes a scientific explanation?
19. What is Michael Behe's notion of irreducible complexity? How does Behe employ this notion to argue for design in biology?
20. Who is Phillip Johnson and why is he important in the debate over intelligent design? (See O'Leary)