

How a biology professor teaches God and evolution

Every year around this time, with the college year starting, I give my students The Talk. It isn't, as you might expect, about sex, but about evolution and religion, and how they get along. More to the point, how they don't.

I'm a biologist, in fact an evolutionary biologist, although no biologist, and no biology course, can help being "evolutionary." My animal behavior class, with 200 undergraduates, is built on a scaffolding of evolutionary biology.

And that's where The Talk comes in. It's irresponsible to teach biology without evolution, and yet many students worry about reconciling their beliefs with evolutionary science. Just as many Americans don't grasp the fact that evolution is not merely a "theory," but the underpinning of all biological science, a substantial minority of my students are troubled to discover that their beliefs conflict with the course material.

There are a few ways to talk about evolution and religion, I begin. The least controversial is to suggest that they are in fact compatible. Stephen Jay Gould called them "nonoverlapping magisteria," noma for short, with the former concerned with facts and the latter with values. He and I disagreed on this (in public and, at least once, rather loudly); he claimed I was aggressively forcing a painful and unnecessary choice, while I maintained that in his eagerness to be accommodating, he was misrepresenting both science and religion.

Read full original article: [God, Darwin, and my College Biology Class](#)