

## New issues in philosophy of biology – new perspectives for philosophy of science

Postgraduate Workshop in Philosophy of Biology organized by the ESRC Centre for Genomics in Society, University of Exeter, May 24-28 2005

Travel and accommodation costs will be covered by the organizers. However, only applications received before February 28, 2005, will be given full consideration for funding.

### Call for applications

The ESRC Centre for Genomics in Society at the University of Exeter is inviting postgraduate students to attend a three days workshop in philosophy of biology. The workshop will provide postgraduate students with an opportunity for an in-depth discussion of recent literature in the field that addresses classical topics of philosophy of science —classification, conceptual change, and causation— in a fresh way.

In the past, this field was to a large extent dominated by problems that came out of the biological disciplines themselves. Philosophers of biology asked questions like: What are the units of selection? What is the true nature of biological species? What is a gene? Leading figures in the field were often biologists, such as Ernst Mayr, Richard Lewontin, and Stephen Jay Gould, to name just the most prominent, and their recourse to philosophy had very often as much to do with the politics of the discipline as with genuine philosophical interest.

While this was and remains to be a productive and legitimate way of pursuing philosophy of biology, the rapid advances of genomics in the past three decades offer new perspectives, not only for the philosophy of biology, but for the philosophy of science in general. The life sciences have grown in prominence and have replaced physics as the paradigm science. Strategies of data collection and experimentation, processes of concept formation, and the relationship between basic science and its application in biology deviate considerably from their counterparts in the physical sciences. Current strategies in biology do not lend themselves easily to the empiricist, hypothetico-deductive model that has long dominated the philosophy of science. On the other hand it has become a pressing issue to understand the sciences in a more descriptive rather than prescriptive manner, due to the far reaching practical and ethical implications that contemporary genomic research has for society at large.

The literature to be discussed will be provided in advance and participants are expected to have read it in advance of the workshop (see preliminary program). The workshop will alternate between work in small groups and panel presentations and discussions.

Postgraduates interested in attending the workshop are asked to send a statement of interest accompanied by a short CV to Staffan Mueller-Wille ([S.E.W.Mueller-Wille@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:S.E.W.Mueller-Wille@exeter.ac.uk)).