

Fall 2026 Midterm Exam questions for 2026 Oct 14

Besides #2, I will select THREE of the following questions, and announce them at 0900 on the day of the Midterm. **You MUST answer #2 and any TWO of the others.** Answers should be single-spaced, and ~2 pages long @ [500 ~ 750 words].

1. A 21st CE cent [\[Image of the Cave\]](#) might begin as follows: **extend the image**, and consider our *current* enlightened or unenlightened nature, compared with that of Plato's.
"Behold! human beings living in a TV den; here they have been from their childhood. Above and behind them a satellite is beeping at a distance. If you look, a widescreen is built against the wall. And do you see images passing on the screen, figures of animals, women playing sports, cute cat videos, some are talking, others captioned...."
2. [\[Aristotle's Four Causes\]](#) were illustrated as explaining an *artificial* object, a four-legged table. How well does it work on a *natural* object? **Explain a four-legged lizard and a legless lizard**, in Aristotelian and Darwinian terms.
3. Linnaeus' *Systema Naturae* (10th ed., 1758) catalogued most of the then known forms of European biological life. What was his purpose in doing so, and what were his assumptions? How did late 18th and early 19th century voyages of exploration challenge Linnaeus' catalog, and his assumptions, so as to require a new theory of Evolution
4. Darwin told Huxley, "*If Wallace had my MS sketch written out in 1842 he could not have made a better short abstract!*" Compare and contrast the two papers presented at the Linnaean Society: to what extent is the Wallace 1858 paper a '*short abstract*' of Darwin's 1842 sketch?
5. Darwin regarded the criticisms of **Lord Kelvin** and **Fleming Jenkin** as the greatest challenges to his theory of evolution by Natural Selection. Describe these criticisms, and the refutations of them.