

The Strange Case of Steve Rissing

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Steve Rissing is a biology professor at Ohio State University involved in attempting to deny a Ph.D. student, Mr. Bryan Leonard, his degree. The trigger for Leonard's problems began when Rissing (a well known active opponent of anyone who questions Darwin), and a math and anthropology professor wrote a letter claiming that "There is evidence that Mr. Leonard's dissertation committee has been improperly constituted and that his research may have involved unethical human-subject experimentation." The letter was sent to Carole Anderson, interim dean of Ohio State's graduate school, in a clear effort to prevent Leonard from earning his doctorate at OSU (Hall, 2005). The "experimentation" the letter refers to is actually Leonard's normal state approved high-school student instruction! The objectors also claimed the "panel is stacked with creationists and the research might be unethical." Professor DiSilvestro, who is on the committee, responded to this charge as follows:

Lynn Elfner, of the Ohio Academy of Sciences, is quoted as saying that the dissertation committee members "are not qualified to judge science. They are avowed creationists." Actually, none of us call ourselves creationists. I have written on intelligent design, but that hardly makes me unable to judge science (2005, p. 8).

Candisky noted that the three objectors have not even read Leonard's dissertation, and based their comments solely on their perception of the testimony that he presented before the Kansas Board of Education! Or, in Stokes' words, they based their opinion "on clues" in his testimony before the Kansas State Department of Education on May 2005 (2005, p. 12).

The main question that Leonard researched for his dissertation was "When students are taught the scientific data, both supporting and challenging macroevolution, do they maintain or change their beliefs over time? And what empirical, cognitive and/or social factors influence

students' beliefs?" (Stokes, 2005, p. 12). This concern is of much interest to science teachers, and is a question some people would much prefer remains unanswered, at least is not answered by scientific research. For this reason Leonard's topic has produced a storm of outrage by Darwinists (Hoppe, 2005). Bergin concluded that curious college students can face grave consequences for researching the results of teaching the weakness of Darwinism:

Three Ohio State University professors recently launched a public smear campaign against graduate student Bryan Leonard, whose dissertation studied the effects of teaching Darwinism's weaknesses alongside its strengths. The professors accused Mr. Leonard of unethical behavior for challenging evolution, but they did not refute Mr. Leonard's thesis. Nor did they read his dissertation (2005, p. 23).

As of June 20, 2005, 42 pages of open mocking name-calling against Leonard inspired by Rissing appeared on the anti-creation web site Panda's Thumb—and not one of the mockers have read his thesis!

Rissing has also been active in demonstrating against the Ohio academic standards that help to insure objective teaching of Darwinism. For example, he demonstrated in protest of the standards that allow criticism of Darwinism in Columbus Ohio with a sign (Rudoren, 2006. p. A12), on which was printed the following question in bold letters:

In 2004, Ohio farmers produced \$820,000,000 of genetically modified soybeans. Such GM technologies depend on and provide strong support for which biological concept?

- a.) Metaphasic interference
- b.) Descent from a common ancestor
- c.) Ecological succession
- d.) One-gene; one-enzyme
- e.) Endoplasmic reticulum

The answer, I assume, is suppose to be "b," *descent with modification*, but the correct answer is clearly intelligent design. The modifications of the soybeans in this case were a result of design by intelligence, and are not the result of random mutations selected by natural selection in the wild. Genetic recombination work is done by highly trained intelligent scientists and technicians

applying what was learned through such techniques as reverse engineering and knock out genetic research techniques that achieve insight provided by the concept of irreducible complexity. It was not the product of natural selection selecting mutations, but intelligent recombine DNA work producing differences that are selected by intelligence for a specific goal and purpose. Another question, evidently written by Rissing (Rudoren, 2006. p. A12), was as follows:

Intelligent design provides useful treatments and prevention insights for which of the following diseases?

- a.) Cystic Fibrosis
- b.) Diabetes
- c.) AIDS
- d.) All of the above
- e.) None of the above

The answer is evidently e) *none of the above*. In fact the answer is d, *all of the above*. Clearly the intelligent design was used to do the research required to understand these diseases as well as to come up with treatments or prevention techniques. It is difficult to understand how professors at a major university could not be aware of the irrationality of his reasoning as illustrated above.

Some insight into the man can be obtained from his student comments. Although student comments are limited in their usefulness, some information can be gleaned from patterns that are apparent in this set of student ratings. His student ratings from the internet (RateMyProfessors.com) are as follows (the many spelling and grammar mistakes were corrected so the evaluations were readable). All bold is mine, and all ratings that were posted were included. Note that, at best, only three out of 56 ratings were positive, most all were very negative. Of the three positive ratings, one student was likely being facetious (the rating dated 6/5/05). The numbers after the course name (Biology 101 and Biology 102, both very basic biology courses) is a rating from 1 to 5, 1 being the lowest score, 5 the highest. The first score refers to "average easiness" (he rated a 2.8), the second is "average helpfulness" (he rated a 1.9) then "average clarity" (Rissing rated 1.9), and next was "hotness" where Rissing rated 0. Last, on

"overall quality," he was rated 1.9. The "hotness" score was added on 10/21/04 and scores before this date included only the first three ratings.

8/4/05 Bio 102 5333 **Even though he rambles and lectures are boring...come on...no tests of any kind and no expensive books.** Go to class and hope for a good group and it's an easy A.

7/3/05 Biology 102 5555 **No midterms. No finals. No books. No problem. Go to class everyday, and it's a guaranteed B (at least). Rants a lot during class, talks about nothing.** Does chose colors. **Says nothing factual, all opinionated lectures. Screams like a madman.** But he is a nice guy, rather helpful, and is passionate about his work. Need more teacher like him.

6/19/05 Bio102 4323 **No exams was nice... but don't take this class if you don't like working in groups.** A good chunk of your grade is all group work and they won't let you do it on your own!!! So basically if you get stuck with a bad group your screwed. Students should have the option to work individually. Also, **lecture is completely pointless and sooo boring**

6/5/05 Bio102 5551 What an eye catching, attractive man. I think his poise and **occasional rants off the subject really intense his character and sultriness.** I'd take him on a honeymoon to Costa Rica anytime. Oh, the class blew, but that may be due to the fact my MOUTH WAS WATERING OVER Professor Rissing the entire time.

6/4/05 Bio 102 1111 **Dick, that is the only word that comes to mind. Do not take him, hold off and find another class or prof.** Always wear different color layers, he will pick colors each day for people he will call on. **He rambles about teaching methods and never states nay real facts. He can't tell his students from his TAs in his class of 500.** Pray you get a good TA!

5/16/05 Bio 102 4222 **He is very arrogant and thinks quite highly of himself- Talks a lot about how great the class is but never really teaches any concrete facts.** But, if you go to class, and can write at least 4th grade level BS papers you'll have an A easily 5/16/05 Bio 1011114 5/16/05 Bio

1013113 4/13/05 Bio 102 5555 Quit complaining, at least we didn't have to buy an outrageously expensive text book, and for that I solute the man! 4/3/05 Bio 1023121 I didn't learn anything!

2/21/05 Bio 102 3112 **He was horrible and rude.** In a class of around 500 students, he would randomly choose someone to answer questions. If you have him, you should wear two different colors of shirts or something to quickly put on top of the other because he calls out on people who have a certain colors on that day.

1/30/05 Bio 101 1115 **This guy was awful. There's no other word to describe him than that. He was rude, arrogant, obnoxious, very misleading, and made what should have been a straightforward class (Bio 101) into an absolute abomination. Avoid this jerk at all costs.** 1/16/05

Bio 101 1112 **He was the worst teacher I've ever had in my life.** There really isn't anything more you can say.

12/28/04 Bio 101 2114 **This man was unreal! In class he would go off on a tangent about something totally off the subject. I learned absolutely nothing in his class. I was always good in Biology, I was in advanced courses in high school and I'm a 2nd year student at OSU and this is my only B!!! if you get stuck with him--**

10/21/04 Bio 1014232 He made an easy class harder than it was designed for. There were over 500 people in the class, and I think maybe 20-30 people got A's according to WebCt. **His quizzes always had confusing questions.** Just hope you get an easy TA to offset this hard professor. **He was a dick to some people also.**

6/7/04 Bio 101 111 **He's evil! Stay away from him!! He does not care about his students. He is just there to listen to himself talk. He makes you want to drop after the first week of class. Take the class with Steve Chordas.** He is SOOO much better and understanding.

6/3/04 Bio102 111

6/2/04 Bio 102 311 **Boring, no point with anything he says, obsessed with his own teaching style which is terrible.**

5/23/04 Bio102 311 **He just keeps repeating the same things over and over...and they have nothing to do with Biology.**

5/17/04102 433 though he is a weird teacher and goes off into his own world once in a while, the lectures do teach something, but it is **very hard to stay awake in that class, and the class is different than any other class I've taken, can be both boring and interesting**

5/7/04 Bio 102 111

5/5/04 Bio 102 221

4/14/04 Bio 102 321 **It is extremely difficult to stay awake in class because he always just goes off on tangents. It's the third week of this class and I still have no idea what the class is about. He's horrible and is not a good teacher in any way.**

4/4/04 Bio 101 342 Interesting teaching style, but **the class was still easy.**

3/30/04 Bio 101 111 **He's terrible.**

3/23/04 Bio 101 111 Do not think that since this class is Bio 101 you will be able to pass if you took AP Bio in high school and did well... **he will make you want to drop the class regardless of what week you are in. GET ANOTHER TEACHER!**

3/22/04 Bio 101 212 **egomaniac!** Go to class if you have him. the quizzes are a lot harder than you think. 101 should be easy, but he makes it way too complicated with his random side notes. He tells you that you won't have to learn terms...forget it. learn them! it's easier!

3/21/04 Bio 101 221 **Everything you hear is true.. this guy's a joke. I often went late to lecture just to take the quiz. He didn't teach us anything really, and constantly led us by the nose with simplistic Biology material. He's smarmy and boring.**

3/17/04 Bio 101 211 Although it seems easy at first because he hardly gives notes and tells you not to buy the book, the quizzes are amazingly hard and stumping. Buy the book!! It helps!! Go to lecture, **actually: don't take him!!** It's supposed to be easy, but is hard!!

3/16/04 Bio 101 211 **You learn nothing, but get graded on it anyway... totally sucks**

3/16/04 Bio 101 311 **This class is a joke. My friend and I alternated going to lecture and taking notes (not that it mattered anyway). Find another teacher! You'll be so sorry if you don't.**

3/16/04 Bio 101 333 If you go to lecture, he's not so bad-actually pretty interesting. Many people are just upset that he doesn't use a book or put notes on web so you HAVE to go to lecture. Don't let that scare you.

3/14/04 Bio 101 311 **This guy is the worst prof at Ohio State. He does not use his book (\$78). The quizzes are a 10 question crap shoot and he tries to be funny but he is not! Find another prof for Bio 101 if you can.**

3/10/04 Bio 101 311 **Rissing is the absolute worst teacher on campus. He is the reason Ohio State has a shady academic record. His class is pointless, he teaches unimportant subject matter, he can teach as well as a mute can sing.**

3/2/04 Bio 101 411 **This guy is a complete idiot and his class is a joke. Possibly the worst professor I've had at OSU and I'm done with undergraduate.** Although, if you had a solid Bio background in high school you should take him because **it's and easy A.**

2/16/04 Bio 101 111 **IDIOT. This guy looks like the psychiatrist on office space that died. He refuses to give any notes, the 10 point quizzes are guessing games. Every class seems like the first day, because he starts them off by defending his putrid class structure.**

2/15/04 Bio 102 244 The voice of David Letterman and looks of Chris Farley and the energy of a high strung coke addict (Farley?). Made class interesting with odd lectures, brought John Glenn to speak, **no exams. Learn to write a 5 page paper and you get an A. This is college!**

2/11/04 Bio101 111 **This guy is screwy. Goes back on what he says, quizzes are hard, refuses to use a textbook, and is just difficult to deal with. even his TA's don't like him.**

2/5/04 Bio 101 211

11/13/03 Bio 102 534 **Didn't care at all, but luckily the class is easy and he doesn't give tests so that is good**

8/21/03 Bio 101 111 **This guy is a screw loose. Can't teach to save his life, lazy and won't use a decent textbook, screws up his quizzes, and he is a liar. Don't waist your time with him, get a better prof.**

3/30/03 Bio 102 545 **Class is easy** if you go. Assignments aren't hard, but they do take time.

3/18/03 Bio 101 555 **Easy class.** I actually learned some things that apply to my life.

3/16/03 Bio 101 311

2/28/03 Bio102 312 **DO NOT TAKE THIS CLASS.** It's easy at first, then they pile on the work at about 6th week. **Rissing is really weird** too.

2/27/03 Bio 102 411 Interesting class concept - **WORTHLESS teacher. He is the BDIU. (South Park)**

2/18/03 Bio 101 121

1/17/03 Bio102 444 This class is great. Not like other classes at all. **Screwy**, but interesting!

1/16/03 Bio 101 433 **Very full of himself, but if you go to lecture and lab, you'll get an A, no problem!**

10/24/02 Bio 101 111 **A poor excuse for a teacher. His curriculum is screwy.**

Conclusion

I feel sorry for students who must pay 20,000 dollars a year to study under men like this. Remember, Rissing is trying to ruin the career of a man that has excellent student feedback and evaluations.

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