

SUTER SCIENCE SEMINARS 2021-22

Webs of Coherence in Human Belief Constructs: The Intersections of Science, Religion, and Philosophy

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The terms “Science” and “Scientific” carry much weight in modern society. What scientists claim to be “true” affects technology, social norms, the law, and influences cultural beliefs. Yet, little attention is paid to the question of what is the epistemic basis for scientific knowledge claims, and defining science in a way that can distinguish what qualifies as being science and what does not? This affects how ideas and organizations are classified, what can be taught in science curricula of public schools, and the broader social narrative. For example, is intelligent design a scientific theory, and is its study a scientific practice, and if not – why not? If Intelligent design is not a scientific theory, then why is evolution by natural selection considered scientific? This lecture will explore how a holistic view of human cognition, and the webs of coherence it weaves, can explain what science is, how it works, how much confidence we should place in its claims, and why we categorize some things as science and not others.

James C. Zimring was awarded a BS in Chemistry, a PhD in Immunology, and an MD from Emory University. He holds the Thomas W. Tillack Chair of Experimental Pathology at the University of Virginia, where he runs an NIH funded laboratory investigating the basic cellular biochemistry and immunology of red blood cells. Since 2002, he has carried out independent scholarship, developed curricula, and lectured in the area of scientific epistemology – exploring the interface of philosophy, anthropology, sociology, and human psychology on scientific knowledge. He has published a book on the topic *What Science is and How it Really Works* (Cambridge University Press, 2019). Dr. Zimring lives in Charlottesville with his wife, child, and 3 fur people – in his leisure time he has perfected the art of losing games of chess to 9-year-old opponents on the internet.



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