FRST 101: Freshman Studies II Winter 2012
Instructor: Stoneking
Handout #6: GOULD, BULLY FOR BRONTOSAURUS

Friday 3 February 2012:

- Complete a lecture reaction form for Professor Bart De Stasio's lecture. Be prepared to discuss the main points of the lecture, especially the explanation of natural selection.
- Read essay #18: **To Be a Platypus** (pp. 269-280) and essay #12: **The Chain of Reason versus the Chain of Thumbs** (pp. 182-197)

Discussion questions for essay #18: **To be a Platypus**

- What are the main points of this essay (note, there are at least two major themes)?
- What characteristics of the Platypus are shared with other mammals?
- What characteristics of the Platypus are not shared with other mammals? With what other group are these characteristics shared?
- Why is it an issue that the Platypus has traits that are characteristic of two different taxonomic groups? To whom?
- In what ways does Gould think the platypus an examplar of the mechanisms of evolutionary change?
- Why did pre-Darwinians think that nature should be "divided into unambiguous static categories?" (page 272)
- What is the 'myth of primitiveness?'
- Unpack the meaning and significance of this quote: "The platypus bill is not a homologue of any feature of birds." (page 278)
- What connection could there be between the discussion of platypus traits and the horrible quote describing colonial collecting expeditions (page 274-5)?

Discussion questions for essay #12: **The Chain of Reason versus the Chain of Thumbs**

- Identify the thesis and/or main point(s) of this essay and be ready to read specific quotations that exemplify it/them.
- Work out the steps that Lavoisier, Franklin, and colleagues went through to test the existence of animal magnetism. Draw comparisons, where appropriate, to Milgram's experiments on obedience to authority.
- Discuss the paragraph that begins at the bottom of page 189 and continues on the top of page 190. In what ways is the experimental approach limited? In what ways is it conservative? Do you agree with Gould?
- What does Lavoisier conclude about the irrationality of humans? What does Gould conclude? With whom do you agree? Why?

- Compare Gould's view of human nature (p. 196) with that of Milgram – would these two thinkers agree or disagree? Why?
- Do you get Gould's references to the following people or events? If not, you might look some of them up:
    - Uri Geller
    - James Randi
    - Houdini
    - Lafayette
    - The Rights of Man
    - The Reign of Terror
    - Pete Rose
    - von Daniken
    - "Presidential calendars are still set by astrologers."