

De-Extinction Debate

On 15 March 2013, Ryan Phelan and her husband Stewart Brand hosted TEDx “Revive & Restore,” a conference which explored the ethical dimensions of “de-extinction,” that is, genetically cloning lost species and reintroducing them into the wild: “Can it be done responsibly? Should it be done at all?” For this assignment, the challenge is to apply the critical tools we’ve learned in *Nature* to analyze the following arguable proposition:

De-extinction is a useful and necessary technology for conservation efforts.

There are 16 people in this class, so:

Pro: 6 of you will argue *for* the proposition.

Con: 6 of you will argue *against* the proposition.

4 of you will serve as questioners and judges.

Professor Chaplin & Evan will serve as moderators.

Preparation

- 1) **Read:** Carefully go over the assigned readings for this week.
- 2) **Watch:** Stewart Brand’s [video](#).
And watch at least one, no more than two, videos from the TEDx “Revive & Restore” conference. <https://www.ted.com/tedx/events/7650>
- 3) **Coordinate:** Fill out on the [following spreadsheet](#) which video(s) you watched, and what position you’d like to take for the debate (pro, con, or judge).

Use the spreadsheet to coordinate with other members of your group ahead of time, so you have an idea of how each of you are approaching this debate.

- 4) **Prepare:**
 - Take notes. You want to use the videos to help you construct arguments for/against the proposition that make sense.
 - Think about what other philosophers / thinkers might inform your argument. Channel them.
 - Feel free to bring a notecard to class for guidance if it is helpful to you.

Debate

The prosecution and defense will sit on opposite sides of the room. The defense (pro) will make an argument in favor of de-extinction (1-2 minutes). The prosecution will then make a brief argument against (1-2 minutes max). The pro and con teams will then switch back and forth, offering counter arguments to one another in whatever order the respective teams feel is most logical. This process will repeat until both sides have exhausted their arguments, at which point each of the judges will be allowed to ask a further question of the pro or con side of the room. Judgements will then be conferred, with closing explanations of majority and minority opinions from the judges. Each student should speak at least once.