

UNDERDETERMINATION IS GOOD, ACTUALLY: SPINOSAURUS AND MODAL KNOWLEDGE

Sponsored by the Department of History & Philosophy



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Most discussion of paleontology's credentials focus on its 'epistemic scarcity': paleontological data is rare, degraded, incomplete and hard to manage. In virtue of this, paleontological hypotheses are often underdetermined, that is, we lack sufficient evidence to discriminate between competing hypotheses. However, this discussion assumes that paleontological knowledge is focused on understanding life's actual history: token events and processes. I'll survey the remarkably diverse array of views on the paleobiology of the largest terrestrial predator of all time: *Spinosaurus*. As we'll see, sparse material evidence affords the productive exploration of rather peculiar modal spaces relating to the critter's morphology, ecology and physiology. I'll have a bash at characterizing the nature and value of this modal knowledge.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2021

12:00 – 1:30 pm (ET)

ZOOM:

<https://emich.zoom.us/j/85602690065>