Course Overview

Who was Charles Darwin? What did he do, and how did he do it? And what did other people do with him? From Darwin’s own time to ours, there have been many people, scientists as well as non-scientists, who have been eager to show that what they wanted to say had also been said by him. This has also meant that many things Darwin said have been selectively ignored when it seemed convenient.

The power of a name is sometimes as great as that of an idea. This course will study what made Darwin possible in his own time, and how he became, then and now, an icon rather than just a Victorian naturalist. We will look at writings of Darwin himself, especially *On the Origin of Species* (1859), *Descent of Man* (1871), and his short autobiography, and attempt to understand what they meant in their own time, how Darwin came to write them, and how his contemporaries helped to shape their future. How did Victorian ideologies of gender, race, and class shape the production and reception of Darwin’s work? We will also examine the growth of “Darwinism” as a set of broader social and cultural movements, particularly in Britain and the United States, including the work of Herbert Spencer, Francis Galton, Alfred Russel Wallace, and other 19th and early-20th-century figures. Were eugenics movements examples or perversions of Darwinism? Finally, we will consider how Darwin’s name has been used by more recent evolutionary biologists and by American anti-evolutionists.

Course Requirements:

Students in this seminar course will be expected to participate actively in its discussions. This requires that all students will have done all the reading for each class. To promote such discussion, a student will present a brief report on the day’s readings at the beginning of each class session together with a one-page outline submitted to me; every student will do this at least once.

Weekly one-page reviews are to be turned in at the start of each class, concerning the PREVIOUS week’s material. These will NOT be formally graded, but they are REQUIRED. Use these reviews to document your responses to the readings and to how others reacted to the readings as seen in the weekly discussions. Feel free to use whatever you write in these reviews for your formal papers (midterm and final).

Midterm Paper: You will be given a choice from three essay questions to answer in a 1500-word paper due on Oct. 21.

Final paper: This paper will be on a topic (relevant to the course) of your choice. Discuss your idea with me first, so that we can determine what sorts of materials you might want to
read in addition to the course readings. This paper will be 2500 words in length. At the end of the semester, but well before the paper is due, all students will present informal descriptions of their paper ideas to the class for general discussion.

Grading will be based on 30% for class participation, 20% for midterm essay, 10% for class report, and 40% for the final paper.

**Academic Integrity (official Cornell policy):**

Absolute integrity is expected of every Cornell student in all academic undertakings. Integrity entails a firm adherence to a set of values, and the values most essential to an academic community are grounded on the concept of honesty with respect to the intellectual efforts of oneself and others. Academic integrity is expected not only in formal coursework situations, but in all University relationships and interactions connected to the educational process, including the use of University resources.

A Cornell student's submission of work for academic credit indicates that the work is the student's own. All outside assistance should be acknowledged, and the student's academic position truthfully reported at all times. In addition, Cornell students have a right to expect academic integrity from each of their peers. If you have any questions about this policy, please see the following website or talk to me:  [http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/Academic/AIC.html](http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/Academic/AIC.html)

Auto-tutorial exercises on proper paraphrasing, quoting, and citation of the work of others may be found at:  [http://plagiarism.arts.cornell.edu/tutorial/index.cfm](http://plagiarism.arts.cornell.edu/tutorial/index.cfm)

If you have any questions about this policy, please see the following website or talk to me:  [http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/Academic/AIC.html](http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/Academic/AIC.html)

> Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of Turnitin.com service is subject to the Usage Policy posted on the Turnitin.com site.

**NOTE:**
1. Late papers will not be accepted.
2. Attendance is mandatory.
3. All papers should be submitted both electronically and in hard form.

**Required Texts:**


We will also make frequent use of a unique web resource, “The Complete Work of Charles Darwin Online”: <http://darwin-online.org.uk/>

Many of the readings will be found electronically on the course Blackboard site, some under “content” and some under “course reserves.”

**WEEKLY SCHEDULE:**

**Week 1 (Aug. 26): Class Introduction: Why Darwin?**

**Week 2 (Sept. 2): Darwin on Darwin; Darwin and the Life of the Past.**

**Readings:**
Ruse DR, chap.1-3.  
*The Autobiography of Charles Darwin* (pp. 21-118, i.e. the autobiography itself).

**Week 3 (Sept. 9): Darwin Makes the Case--I**

**Readings:**
Ruse DR, chap. 7.
Darwin and Wallace, 1858 Linnaean Society papers, found in Darwin-online under “Publications”: click on “articles,” page down to “1858.”

**Week 4 (Sept. 16): Darwin Makes the Case--II**

**Readings:**

**Week 5 (Sept. 23): Significance of Geology**

**Readings:**
Charles Lyell, *Principles of Geology*, vol. 1 (1830), chaps. 5, 9; search in Darwin-online (note that there’s confused pagination for the start of chap. 5, which begins as a rogue p.93).

**Week 6 (Sept. 30): Darwin Travels the World**

**Readings:**
Darwin et al., *Voyages of the Adventure and Beagle*, vol. III (1839: original version of Darwin’s *Voyage of the Beagle*), chap. XIX and
Week 7 (Oct. 7): **Darwin and His Critics**

**Readings:**
- Ruse DR, chap. 8.

*Midterm paper questions set (papers due in class on Oct. 28)*

Week 8 (Oct. 14): **Library Session** (Kroch Library room 2B49)

Week 9 (Oct. 21): **Web exercise and work on papers** (no class meeting)

Week 10 (Oct. 28): **Anthropology and the History of Humanity**

**Readings:**

Week 11 (Nov. 4): **Race, Gender, and Morality**

**Readings:**
- Darwin, *Descent*, vol. 2, chaps. XIX-XX.

Week 12 (Nov. 11): **Establishing Darwin’s Legacy**

**Readings:**
- Steven Shapin and Barry Barnes, “Darwin and Social Darwinism: Purity and History,” in Barnes and Shapin (eds.), *Natural Order: Historical Studies of Scientific Culture* (London/Beverly Hills: Sage,
1979), pp. 125-142.

Week 13 (Nov. 18): *Eugenics, Social Darwinism, Race Science*

Readings:
Darwin, *Descent*, vol. 2, chap. XXI.
Ruse DR, chap. 9

Week 14 (Dec. 2): *Creationism and Intelligent Design*

Readings:
Judge William R. Overton, “Court Opinion,” (pp. 279-311)
Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District
Michael Behe, “Expert Witness Testimony” (pp. 434-455)
Judge John E. Jones II, “Memorandum Opinion,” (pp. 506-535)

Final papers due to me (BOTH electronic and hard copy, please) by end of business on the day assigned for final examinations for this course.