Environmental History: Darwin in our Time
Seminar, Mon 1:30-4:20 pm, 114 Frist Campus Center
Professor William Howarth • Course Website

The course focuses on close reading of four works by Charles Darwin that revolutionized natural science and challenged Western concepts of humanity. Our discussions explore Darwin's ideas of nature, choice, and language. We also consider four waves of response to Darwin: fundamentalism, social Darwinism, creationism, and neo-Darwinism.

**Requirements:** (1) talk on a contemporary topic; (2) notes for a seminar, (3) mid-term and final.

**Recommended Texts** (see also Online Texts)


**Voyage of the Beagle**

17 Sep  *Heavy Rain-Musical Frogs* (1-7)
Topics: creation stories and life forms, dominion and stewardship.
Talk: Creationism

24 Sep  *Miserable Condition of the Savages* (8-14)
Topics: early ideas of nature, providence, theodicy, and animals
Talk: Theodicy

01 Oct  *Differences in the Species or Races* (15-21)
Topics: exploration and imperialism, ecology as a paradigm
Talk: Imperialism

**The Origin of Species**

08 Oct  *Natural Selection* (1-5)
Topics: evolution and its reception, Darwinism in literature, politics, ethics, and science
Talk: Natural selection

15 Oct  *Difficulties on Theory* (6-10)
Topics: production-consumption, competition-collaboration, social Darwinism
Talk: Social Darwinism

22 Oct  *Mutual Affinities of Organic Beings* (11-14)
Topics: aesthetic and scientific expression, heredity-environment, life writing.
Talk: Evolution and ecology

25 Oct  *Take-home exam on weeks 1-6* (distributed 25 Oct, due 27 Oct at 5 pm)

**Fall Break**
The Descent of Man
05 Nov  On the Descent of Man (1-7)
Topics: primatology, race and racism, fundamentalism
Talk: Fundamentalism

12 Nov  Sexual Selection (8-14)
Topics: revisions of evolution: succession, sexuality, intelligent design
Talk: Sexual selection

19 Nov  Secondary Sexual Characters (15-21)
Topics: ecology and environmentalism; wilderness preservation
Talk: Intelligent design

The Expression of the Emotions
26 Nov  General Principles of Expressions (1-5)
Topics: biophilia, biophobia, creationism.
Talk: Biophilia and animal rights

03 Dec  Special Expressions of Man (6-9)
Topics: sacramental nature, deep ecology and evolution.
Talk: Deep ecology

10 Dec  Self-Attention (10-14)
Topics: animal rights, genetic engineering, the future of Darwinism.
Talk: Genetic engineering

17 Jan  Take-home exam on weeks 7-12 (Due on 19 Jan)

Student Talks
Each week, students will give 15-minute talks that link a topic to Darwin and contemporary life and thought. In some cases I will supply background reading; see also Resources for Talks.

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Office Hours: by appointment