

The Fuss About Darwin
Freshman Seminar
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There is no scientific controversy about Darwinian evolution – that much has been settled. Yet more than any other scientific revolution of the modern era, more than Einstein’s relativity or Heisenberg’s uncertainty, Darwin’s theory of natural selection has made some Americans very angry. The controversy about Darwin began almost immediately upon the arrival of *Origin of Species* in the United States in 1860 and it continues to this day.

This Freshman Seminar will look at the history of this controversy by examining the scientific ideas, philosophical and literary responses, and recent legal battles. We will try to understand the nature of these fights, why they continue, and why they seem only to happen in the United States.

Course Expectations:

This seminar will meet once/week for 48 minutes. Attendance is mandatory. Students will have short reading selections to prepare for each class – the readings assigned each week are to be completed before the class meets. Class will be run as a combination of short lectures and seminar discussion – students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the major ideas presented in the readings and the lectures.

Each student will write 5 (five) brief (250-500 word) essays reacting to the reading over the course of the term. You can respond to, argue with, explore more fully the main ideas in the readings. These will be emailed to me by 4pm the day before class meets and we will use them as the basis for our discussions. They are to be well-written, well-argued essays free of typos, grammatical mistakes, and infelicities.

Readings will be available on reserve.

Final grades will be either S or U:

Half (50%) of your grade will be assessed on the basis of your participation in class; the other half (50%) will be assessed on the basis of your weekly essays.

NOTES:

Disabilities:

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Please contact the

Office for Disability Services at 614-292-3307 in room 150 Pomerene Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is the representation of another's works or ideas as one's own: it includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person's work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person's ideas. All cases of suspected plagiarism, in accordance with university rules, will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. The University's policy about plagiarism is quite clear and available to all students on the Office of Academic Affairs website.

Course Schedule

Week I: Introductions – Science in the 19th Century

-Read: Selections from Genesis

Week II: 1859 – The Controversy Begins

-Read: Selection from *Origin of Species*

Week III: Darwin Comes to America

-Read: Chapt 1, Cynthia Russett, *Darwin in America*

Week IV: Darwin vs. The Bible – The Philosopher's Response

-Read: William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*

Week V: The Philosopher's Response, Part II

-Read: John Dewey, "The Influence of Darwin Upon Philosophy"

Week VI: The Revenge of That (New) Old Time Religion: Scopes Part I

-Read: Documents Related to Scopes Trial

Week VII: The Revenge of That (New) Old Time Religion: Scopes Part II

-Watch: Inherit the Wind

Week VIII: Creationism Redux: "Intelligent Design"

-Read: Jack Hitt, "The New Creationists"

Week IX: "Intelligent Design" vs. Science: The Dover Trial

-Read: Excerpt from Judge Jones' opinion

Week X: Looking Forward: Creationism and American Education

Prof. Steven Conn is an Assoc. Prof in the History department where he teaches 19th and 20th century American cultural and intellectual history (History 579.01 & 579.02). He has published a history of American museums – *Museums and American Intellectual Life, 1876-1926* – a book on the place of Native Americans in 19th century intellectual discourse – *History's Shadow: Native Americans and Historical Consciousness in the 19th Century* – among many other publications. He has received a fellowship from the American Council of Learned Societies and is the Department's Director of Public History.