New York University Fall 2014

Gallatin School MW 11:00-12:15

Prof. Cittadino Goddard B06

[THIS SYLLABUS IS TENTATIVE AND INCOMPLETE]

**IDSEM-UG 1156**

**THE DARWINIAN REVOLUTION**

Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution by natural selection may be the single most influential scientific theory ever proposed. It would be safe to say that the world we inhabit has not been the same place since 1859, when Darwin, nudged on by Alfred Russel Wallace’s co-discovery of the idea of natural selection, first published *On the* *Origin of Species*. Since that time the Darwinian theory has inspired considerable self‑reflection, opened up whole new fields of inquiry, and provoked controversy after controversy. This course examines the origin, nature, and consequences of Darwin’s evolution theory, with an emphasis on the interrelationships among the social, cultural, and intellectual dimensions of the scientific enterprise. Topics will include religious opposition to the theory; applications, and misapplications, of the theory, such as Social Darwinism, eugenics, and sociobiology; the influence of Darwinian thought on politics, literature, and the arts; and various philosophical issues raised by the theory, such as biological determinism and free will. A background in the sciences is not assumed for this course, but you are expected to make a sincere effort to understand the nature of the Darwinian theory and the scientific basis of some of the controversies surrounding its applications. You are strongly encouraged to visit the many exhibits at the American Museum of Natural History, such as those on human origins and fossil mammals.

Objectives: From my perspective, this course has three major goals. If all goes as planned and hoped, at the end of the semester (1) you should have become familiar enough with the main features of the Darwinian Revolution to fully understand its significance, including understanding what Darwin actually said and how various people have interpreted and misinterpreted what he said, (2) you should be able to sort through and analyze for yourself many of the current applications of Darwinian theory and controversies involving the theory, whether in newspaper or magazine articles, television programs, legislative debates and court cases, or whatever, and (3) you should have developed an understanding of the Darwinian Revolution that is meaningful for you personally.

Course requirements: (1) Attendance, punctuality, and participation; (2) careful and critical reading of the texts; (3) regular response papers on the readings; and (4) three formal essays. See details on following page.

Office hours and contact information. Please feel free to drop by during the hours listed below or to make an appointment for another time. I am fairly vigilant about keeping office hours, but unexpected events sometimes intervene, so it helps to let me know in advance even if you plan to come by during regular office hours.

Gene Cittadino

1 Washington Place, Room 412

Office hours: Tues. & Thurs. 2-4; Weds. 3:30-5:30

(all other times by appointment only)

[ec15@nyu.edu](mailto:ec15@nyu.edu) 212-992-7774

Texts (The following have been ordered at the NYU Bookstore and have been placed on reserve in the Bobst Library

Edward Larson, *Evolution: The Remarkable History of a Scientific Theory*

Kurt Vonnegut, *Galápagos*

Charles Darwin, *Origin of Species* (Penguin--this edition only)

Charles Darwin, *Voyage of the Beagle* (Penguin--this edition only)

Charles Darwin, *Autobiographies* (Penguin--this edition only)

Charles Darwin, *Descent of Man, & Sexual Selection in Relation to Sex* (Penguin)-optional\*

\*the required selections from *Descent of Man* will be made available on NYU Classes

Mark Pagel, *Wired for Culture: Origins of the Human Social Mind* (W.W. Norton)Gordy Slack, *The Battle Over the Meaning of Everything*

There will be a number of supplementary readings as well. These will be posted on NYU Classes.

A Note on the Darwin texts: Please purchase *only* the Penguin editions of *Voyage* and *Origin*. There are many published versions of all Darwin’s books, but please read the Penguin editions, as these are the editions that I wish to use and we will then all be on the same page (literally). The first editions of *Voyage* and *Origin* are crucial for this course. You must use these.

Basis for evaluation. (1) Attendance & participation. Participation is sometimes difficult to gauge; it doesn’t necessarily mean speaking up on every point in every class. I’ll make an effort to evaluate your level of participation in a combined attendance-participation component (10%) of your grade. (2) Response papers. There will be one response paper on the reading due each week, except when essays are due (15%). These should be no more than a page in length and can be informal--single spacing is fine for response papers. (3) Three formal essays of 6-8 pages each (75%). The essays will be based on course readings for the most part, but there may be options to use material beyond the course readings. Details to follow. Due dates (subject to change) are indicated on the schedule that follows.

*A note on response papers*. You must turn in one per week, either Monday or Wednesday, based on the readings for that day. Response papers receive full credit only if turned in on time.

Ground rules. ***Attendance and etiquette***. I take attendance and expect you to attend every class. The class begins promptly at 11:00. Please respect your classmates and arrive on time; late arrivals always disrupt the atmosphere of a classroom, as do mid-class exits and re-entries. The only good reason for leaving the classroom in the middle of a class period is sudden illness, so expect to remain for the full 75 minutes. For obvious reasons, turn off cell phones before coming to class. The success of this class depends upon open discussions. Feel free to speak your mind, but also be prepared to listen and respect the opinions of others. ***Turn off laptops****.* If you bring a laptop, please do not turn it on or use it during class time. Notetaking with pen or pencil is a wonderful exercise of the mind and hand. ***Late papers***. Papers are due on the dates designated. A paper that is not turned in on time is late, regardless of the reason. Having work due in other classes is not an acceptable excuse. Unless the paper is late due to illness or an emergency, it will be downgraded. ***Documentation and plagiarism***. I will assume that all written work is your own and that you understand the basic rules for acknowledging your sources. If you don’t, please ask; I’ll be more than happy to assist you. Also, please review the official Gallatin statement on academic integrity: <http://gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/integrity.html>

SCHEDULE OF TOPIC AND READINGS

We will try to keep to this schedule if at all possible, but there may be some juggling of particular topics and readings toward the end of the semester. You should be prepared to discuss the reading that is listed under a given date on that date. Handouts from week to week will indicate which readings to emphasize for discussion. \*Indicates readings available on NYU Classes.

I. Setting the stage

W Sept. 3 Introductions; Darwinism today

M Sept. 8 Discovering extinction & deep time

\*Cuvier, “Living and Fossil Elephants” and “The Megatherium from South America” (Blackboard)

Larson, *Evolution*, chap. 1

(Begin reading Vonnegut, *Galápagos*)

W Sept. 10 Stephen Gould’s three riddles

*Darwin’s Revolution in Thought* (video)

Paley, *Natural Theology*, excerpts (handout)

(Continue reading Vonnegut)

M Sept. 15 Humankind a million years from now?

Vonnegut, entire

II. Darwin, Wallace, and the birth of natural selection theory

W Sept. 17 Evolution before Darwin; Darwin’s early life

Larson, *Evolution*, chap. 2

Darwin, *Autobiographies*, pp. 1-38

M Sept. 22 Darwin comes of age: the Beagle voyage

Darwin, *Voyage of the Beagle*, chaps. 1, 2, & 5 (and look over the chronology, pp. ix-xi); optional: Introduction & Appendix One

W Sept. 24 The voyage continues: a river excursion, Tierra del Fuego, and Galapagos

Darwin, *Voyage*, chaps. 10, 11, & 14 (chap. 9 is optional)

M Sept. 29 Tahiti, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, and home

Darwin, *Voyage*, chaps. 20, 21, & 23

W Oct. 1 From the *Beagle* to transmutation

Darwin, *Autobiographies*, pp. 39-69

M Oct. 6 Variation, natural and domestic

Darwin, *Origin of Species*, Darwin’s introduction and chaps. 1 & 2

[REVISED AND COMPLETE SYLLABUS WILL BE HANDED OUT IN CLASS ON MONDAY, SEPT 8, AND POSTED ON NYU CLASSES]