

HUM 204: Age of Darwin

Spring 2022

Course Information

Time: MW 11:25A–12:40P

Instructor Name: Ge Fang

Email: gfang1@iit.edu

Instructor office: Siegel Hall 235

Office Hours: W 3:00P–5:00P or by appointments

Classroom: Siegel Hall 204

Zoom Link:

<https://wustl.zoom.us/j/99245563905?pwd=VkpvT1ZVSG5RTk5UcjRmUjJWZ1dQdz09>

Course Description

Charles Darwin is arguably the most influential scientist ever lived: the idea of evolution by natural selection, besides framing the subsequent biological research, has far-reaching impacts in humanity fields such as philosophy, arts, literature, cultural studies, and politics. No other scientific idea, not even Newton's gravitational theory or Einstein's general theory of relativity, is comparable in the range of impact. This course introduces students to Darwin's idea of evolution, its intellectual precursors, and contemporary development in evolutionary theories.

Such an arrangement of might make the course sound like a survey of science rather than a humanity course. This is intentional, because part of the goal of this course is to show you that humanity and science are continuous with each other. In particular, I will focus on the intersection between Darwinism and philosophy. Many of the topics covered in this class are central in philosophy of religion, general philosophy of science, philosophy of biology, philosophy of social science, and value theories. The questions we will look into are: Is religion compatible with evolution? What is the scientific method? What is a species? Do evolution theories apply to psychology and/or culture? Does evolution determine our moral emotion and cognition?

The primary goal of this course is to get students acquainted with the philosophy issues surrounding Darwinism. Along the way, the students are trained to develop philosophical skills in

- Interpreting philosophical and scientific text
- Judging whether a scientific claim is philosophically controversial
- Identifying theses and defining key terms from philosophical articles
- Reconstructing important arguments from readings in a charitable way
- Evaluating arguments written by other authors
- Constructing valid arguments to support or counter a thesis
- Writing clear academic essays to communicate arguments

Textbook

Many but not all readings may be found in

Hume, David, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*

(For a version of this work re-written in contemporary English, go to:

<http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/hume1779.pdf>), and

Darwin: *A Norton Critical Edition*, 3rd ed., edited by Philip Appleman.

Other required readings will be uploaded to Blackboard (BB below).

Evaluation

Response papers: 20% in total. You need to turn in one response paper each week (the first and second weeks count as one). Each response paper should raise at least one serious question about something in the reading, and should use between 150 – 300 words (12pt Times New Roman font, double spacing, standard margins). Any submission that fulfills the letter of the assignment will earn 1 points; Any submission that fulfill the spirit of the assignment, and show thoughtful engagement with the required reading, will earn 2 points. All others will receive zero. If you want 2 points, make sure you are asking a question, and make sure you raise the question in a way that demonstrates your reading of the assignment (and not just the first page or a synopsis). Responses papers should be submitted via Blackboard, the deadline is 9am of day of lecture for the required reading you are responding to. The top 10 out of 14 possible submissions will count toward your final grade.

Eight quizzes: 20% in total. These are surprise quizzes; the dates for the quizzes are not announced beforehand. Each quiz will comprise four multiple-choice or true/false questions about the day's required reading. You will get 2 points for writing your first and last name on the quiz, and 0.5 point for each correct answer. The final score will be based on the 5 highest scores out of 8.

Two essays: 30% each. Each essay is to be around 1500 word (12pt Times New Roman font, double spacing, standard margins). Prompts for the essays will be distributed at least two weeks before the respective deadlines. Requirement of the essays is: Identify one central argument in one or more readings. Clearly state the premises and the conclusion of the argument. Consider possible objections to this argument and explain why you do or do not find those objections convincing. The essay will be evaluated on 1) the adequate grasp of the issue, the understanding of the argument, the accuracy in interpreting readings, 2) novel insights and creativity, and 3) exposition (grammar, prose, composition). Papers should be submitted via Blackboard. Late papers will drop in final score by one letter grade per day.

Laptop policy

Laptops and electric devices are not allowed for in-person sessions, unless I have assigned some reading not in the textbook, or you have convinced me of some other legitimate reason to use your device.

Course Schedule (tentative)

Topic 1: Natural religion

1/10 M: Introduction. Hume, Letter from Pamphilus to Hermippus

1/12 W: Religion and Skepticism. Hume, part 1

1/17 M: MLK day. No class.

1/19 W: The Design Argument. Hume, part 2, 3

1/24 M: Problems with the Design Argument. Hume, parts 4, 5

1/26 W: Meaning and Religion. Hume, part 12

Topic 2: Darwin and Origin of Species

1/31 M: Introduction to Darwin. Darwin, pp. 23–40, 44–49; recommended: 3–13, 285–87

2/2 W: Darwin's *Voyage of the Beagle*, pp. 61–81

2/7 M: Darwin's Argument for the Theory of Evolution through Natural Selection. Darwin, pp. 95–111

2/9 W: Natural Selection and the Divergence of Character. Darwin, pp. 111–35

2/14 M: Darwin's Replies to Objections. Darwin, pp. 135–74

2/16 W: Darwin's Replies to Objections, continued. Darwin, pp. 135–74

Topic 3: Darwin and Philosophy of Science

2/21 M: Darwin and Scientific Method. Darwin, pp. 28–29, 257–65

2/23 W: Method, cont'd. Darwin, pp. 265–70, 280–85

2/28 M: Taxonomy. Darwin, pp. 356–363. Section 1 of Kitcher's "Some puzzles about species"

3/2 W: Defining species. Kitcher, "Some puzzles about species"

Paper 1 due on 3/4, 23:59pm (Fri)

3/7 M: Units of Selection. Lewontin, "Units of Selection" (BB)

3/9 W: Evolution without population. Doolittle, "Natural selection through survival alone, and the possibility of Gaia" (BB)

3/14 M: Spring break. No class

3/16 W: Spring break. No class

Topic 4: Application of Darwinism

3/21 M: Sociobiology. Darwin pp. 409 - 426

3/23 W: Evolutionary psychology. Cosmides & Tooby, "Evolutionary Psychology: A Primer" (BB)

3/28 M: The Descent of Man on the evolution of intelligence and morality. Darwin, pp. 213–22,

3/30 W: The Descent of Man, cont'd. Darwin Pp. 243–254

- 4/4 M: Human evolution. Darwin Pp. 326-342.
- 4/6 W: Human evolution. Boyd et al., "Cultural niche" (BB)
- 4/11 M: Competition and Cooperation. Darwin, pp. 389–98, 403-8
- 4/13 W: Evolution of cooperation. Axelrod & Hamilton, "The evolution of cooperation" (BB)
- 4/18 M: Evolution and Ethics. Darwin, pp. 507–17.
- 4/20 W: Evolution and Ethics. Machery & Mallon 2010. Section 1 and 2
- 4/25 M: Evolution and Ethics. Machery & Mallon 2010. Section 3 and 4.
- 4/27 W: TBD

Paper 2 due on 4/29, 23:59pm (Fri)

5/2-7: Exam week. No exam for this course.

Academic Honesty

Students are bound by the IIT policy on academic integrity in all aspects of this course. One of the most common violations of academic integrity is plagiarism. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, copying someone else's exact words, paraphrasing their sentences, or summarizing their thoughts or ideas, without giving credit to the original author. Here is a web resource on when to cite:

http://tiger.uic.edu/~edelberg/crediting_others/index.htm

Disability

Students with disabilities may request accommodations to ensure equal access and equal academic opportunities. Requests for accommodation are coordinated through Center for Disability Resources. The Center for Disability Resources is located in Suite 3F3-1, 10 W 35th St. You can also call them at 312-567-5744 or email them at disabilities@iit.edu. Should accessibility issues arise, be sure to reach out to your instructor about your Accommodation Plan.