

IDSC 480:
Honors Seminar: Darwin's *Origin of Species*

JRC 222
Tuesday 1525-1700

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Course Description

This course will introduce students to Charles Darwin's three fundamental ideas—the common ancestry of all living things, the differential modification of species by natural selection, and the idea that man is not different in kind from animals. This will be done primarily through a close reading of extensive selections from two of his major works—*The Origin of Species* and *The Descent of Man*—and supplemented by computer-based simulations of some of the natural phenomena that constituted his evidence and a limited amount of reading from other sources. The course will examine both the evidence Darwin marshals and the structure of his argument. It will place Darwin's work in its historical context by looking at William Paley's *Natural Theology* and Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* and will look at ways in which later scientific work such as Mendelian genetics and continental drift have strengthened the case that can be made for common ancestry and natural selection. It will also look briefly at challenges to natural selection that have been raised under the banner of "intelligent design" and, in a little more detail, at an Aristotelian defense of human exceptionalism, the idea that man is different in kind than animals.

The primary emphasis of this course will be scientific, philosophical, and historical, but the course will give some attention to the relation between science and religion.

Required Texts

Charles Darwin
On the Origin of Species (1st ed.)
Dover
0486450066
paperback

Charles Darwin
The Descent of Man
Penguin
0140436316
paperback

SimBio labs:
Darwinian Snails
Evolutionary Evidence
The cost for these two labs will be \$10.

Please follow the instructions below to subscribe to SimUText for your **Honors Seminar: Darwin's Origin of Species SP15** course at **University of Saint Thomas - MN**.

1. Go here: <https://simutext.com/register.jsp?accesskey=YAZM-tZN2-dbDf-Xtw2-URux>
2. **Click the Continue button.**
3. Once you complete your registration, you must download and install the SimUText application to view your course materials. You will need the account information you created when you registered to log in to the SimUText System.

Should you encounter a problem registering, the access key for this course is **YAZM-tZN2-dbDf-Xtw2-URux**.

Problems or questions? Visit [SimUText Support](#) to search our Knowledge Base and view Video Tutorials.

If you are not able to find the answer to your question, you can submit a support request from the support page.

Assignments

Group journal activity

We will assign you to a group of 3-4 people for the semester, in an ongoing informal writing assignment that will serve as an extension of class discussion (and also as excellent preparation for the oral exam). Each week you will write a 500-word reflection on the readings for the upcoming class. This is not a book report—you should write about what you do not understand, or what you half-understand, or how this week’s material connects to last week’s, or how this material fits in (or conflicts with) your prior knowledge and other experiences. This reflection will be due each week on Sunday evening.

Then, prior to class, you are to write a 250-word response to two of your group members. Your job in writing these responses is not to evaluate the quality of their ideas or writing. Instead, highlight ideas that you found particularly interesting. Write about how your struggle with these ideas compares to theirs.

You will not get individual comments back from your instructors on these journals during the semester (the idea is that you are getting feedback from each other), although I will be reading them and may occasionally make some general comments to the class. You will get a grade at the end of the semester based on participation (in writing the original reflections and in responding to your group members) and the quality of your contributions over the course of the semester.

In Blackboard, go to “Groups”, and then click on your group. Under “Group Tools”, choose “Group Journal”. Click on “Create Journal Entry.” Add a title and text (>500 words) below. Post responses as a comment under the original entry.

For those interested, this paper describes the benefits of this type of writing assignment:

<http://wac.colostate.edu/journal/vol16/gopen.pdf>

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Lab activities

On March 3 and April 7, instead of the group journal activity, your group will submit responses (via Blackboard) to the computer-based lab activity.

Oral Examination

During the scheduled exam period for our course, each student will participate in an oral exam. Students will be provided with a list of six exam questions, two weeks in advance. During the exam, students will be able to select one question from the list, and the instructors will select the second question.

Grades

Group journal activity: 30%

Lab activities: 20%

Oral examination: 50%

Accommodations for students with disabilities:

Qualified students with documented disabilities who may need classroom accommodations should make an appointment with the Disability Resources office. Appointments can be made by calling 651-962-6315. You may also make an appointment in person in Murray Herrick, room 110. For further information, you can locate the Disability Resources office on the web at <http://www.stthomas.edu/enhancementprog/>.