

HUM 104
Age of Darwin
– IIT –
Spring 2008

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Special Thanks

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The following syllabus and lecture notes are largely derived from Prof. Warren Schmaus's course notes. I wish to express all my gratitude to him for letting me use them.

Part I

Presentation

Chapter 1

Syllabus

The following syllabus and lecture notes are largely derived from Prof. Warren Schmaus's. I wish to express all my gratitude to him for this.

1.1 Course Information

- Course Number: HUM 104
- Credits: 3
- Class meets: Mondays, Tuesdays, 11:25 - 12:30, Room E1 102
- Prerequisites: none
- Instructor: Soazig Le Bihan
 - Office Number: SH 234
 - Office Hours: Mondays, 2-4pm and by appointment
 - Mailbox: Siegel Hall 218
 - Email: lebihan@iit.edu - Websites:
 - Blackboard: <http://blackboard.iit.edu/>
 - Website: www.soaziglebihan.org

Note that all current course information (including class hand-outs, homework assignments, announcements, any revision of the schedule, exam questions, links etc.) can be found on the course website.

1.2 Course Description

Science has played a prominent role in challenging the notion that human beings hold a privileged place in a world that had been designed for their sake. Perhaps the most obvious example is the Copernican Revolution, which shattered the idea that our planet was the center of the universe. The publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) may also be regarded as pivotal event, contributing to a revolutionary shift of thinking in the Western culture. As you know, Darwin's text is about "natural selection", i.e. the mechanism of evolution of all forms of life on earth. One important aspect of the "Darwinian revolution" is to have undermined the idea that nature and life, including human life, reflect the purpose or design of some intelligent, conscious agent.

We will begin our class by tracing this shift of thinking by comparing two novels, one written before and one during the Darwinian Revolution, with respect to the differences in their portrayals of the nature of human beings as well as their explanations of human destinies. *Frankenstein* (1816), at least in its original, pre-Hollywood version, is about what happens to a man whose ambition leads him to try to set himself apart from and even above nature, while *Thérèse Raquin* (1867) is about two lovers who are completely enslaved by their physiological characters.

Darwin's ideas should be put into perspective as a contribution in a long lasting debate, which even goes back to the Ancient Greeks. For a long time, philosophers and scientists had claimed that the actual organization of forms of life on the planet find its source either in an intelligent, conscious agency, or in pure chance. What makes Darwin's contribution to this debate so special that we can say we are living in the "Age of Darwin"? To answer this question, we will focus on the so-called "argument from design". The argument from design roughly consists in concluding to the existence of a conscious agency responsible for the creation and organization of nature, on the basis of the observation that many aspects of the natural world display features directly analogous to objects of human design. We will compare two theoretical contributions to the debate on the argument from design, one by the philosopher David Hume and one from Darwin himself. We will see that scientists and philosophers construct their arguments in much the same way. That said, we will also insist on the originality of Darwin's scientific explanation of the evolution of life, which is that natural selection, although random and unconscious, is capable of outdoing the most complex feats of

human intelligence.

1.3 Documentation

Required Texts:

- Shelley, Mary, *Frankenstein, or, the modern Prometheus*
- Zola, Emile, *Thérèse Raquin*
- Hume, David, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*
- Darwin, Charles, *Texts and Commentary (Appleman)*, A Norton Critical Edition, 3rd edition, ed. by Philip Appleman

1.4 Course Requirements

Your grade will be based on the following:

1. Attendance and participation, 10 points;
2. Quizzes, 10 points;
3. Two take-home short papers, 20 points each;
4. An in-class mid-term exam, 15 points;
5. An in-class comprehensive final exam, 25 points.

These will be graded in the following way:

Attendance Attendance is required. There will be a lot of material covered in this course and most of it is hard. While the in-class discussion should gradually (and somewhat painlessly) make you acquainted with most of the material, you should expect to be lost very quickly and probably to fail if you are not attending the course.

You will have three classes that you can be absent for without penalty (not including the exam classes which you must be present for). Beyond three classes, one absence counts as a zero.

That said, absences may be excused in cases of illness or other extreme circumstances. Relevant documentation is of course required in such cases. However, you will be expected to have worked by yourself on the material covered during the classes you may have missed.

Participation You are expected to participate in class. During lecture I will ask basic questions about the readings, and expect you to try to answer them. You will not be penalized for answering incorrectly. If you can't answer the questions I ask, I encourage you to ask questions. Both of these satisfy the class participation requirement. I have found that students learn best when they are asked to contribute to the lecture.

This means that, when reading at home, you have to be an *active* reader. Actively reading the original material will be one of the most important parts of the work you are expected to do for the course. Reading philosophy is hard, and you will sometimes encounter difficulties to understand the material during the semester. I will provide you with study questions to help you get prepared to the discussion in class. That the class is mainly a discussion class also implies that you should have your textbook with you in class.

For very useful guidelines on how to read philosophy, see J. Pryor web site:

<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html>

Surprise quizzes :

The surprise quizzes are meant to make sure that you work on a regular basis. They will come into two types:

Before Class Quizzes : these will consist on short, simple, multiple choices questions about the readings. The point is to check on your doing your homework.

Last Minute Quizzes : these will consist on short, simple, multiple choices questions about the material covered during the class. The point is to check your being attentive during class.

You should expect to have about 10 to 15 surprise quizzes. I will be generous in grading the quizzes. The worse three grades will be dropped at the end.

Short Papers You will be assigned two short papers (800 to 1200 words, that is 2 to 4 pages 12 points double spaced) on one topic.

You will be first asked to turn in a prospectus of your paper. A **prospectus** consists in a tentative title and a summary of your argument, between 200 and 300 words. I will give general comments on your prospectuses in class. Then, you will be asked to write a draft of your paper which you will have to bring in class for **peer review**. **Prospectuses and peer reviews are both mandatory. They will count together for 5 points.** You will be penalized if you do not turn in your prospectus or if you do not come with your paper the day of the peer review by **one letter grade each**.

NOTE: Late Assignments: without prior arrangements being made with the instructor, the grade of any late assignment will be lowered by one letter a day.

IMPORTANT: If you encounter difficulties concerning an assignment, it is almost always possible to make arrangements before the assignment is due. No accommodation is possible once the deadline has passed. **COME AND TALK TO ME BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE.**

In-class Exams You will have two in-class exams : a mid-term and a final. Both will consist in answering short questions, which will be taken out of a list which will be distributed in advance.

The final in-class exam is **COMPREHENSIVE**.

In-class exams are closed notes, closed books.

The exams are mandatory. Absences may be excused only in cases of severe illness or other extreme circumstances. Proof of extreme circumstances or severe illness is required.

Academic honesty and Plagiarism Unless collaborative work is specifically called for, work on assignments and exams is expected to be your own. Plagiarism is taken seriously in IIT. In case of plagiarism, your assignment will receive a zero. Also, I will report the case to the university. You may be in serious trouble, up to being expelled out of school, in case of recidivism. Please refer to the Code of Academic Honesty in the Student Handbook for details concerning sanctions.

I'll be glad to answer questions you may have about how to document sources properly. Anytime you take a phrase or sentence from someone, you have to quote it. Anytime you take an idea from someone, you have to cite your sources.

Writing Center The Writing Center (SH 232-233) provides free one-on-one consultation, both by appointment and as available on a walk-in basis. Consultants Ms. Kraus and Mr. Dabbert are especially trained in working with writers for whom English is a second language. You can help you tremendously in writing assignments.

Special needs Adaptation of methods and materials for students with documented disabilities will be made in consultation with the Center for Disability Resources. I will gracefully accommodate any special need.

1.5 Grading Policies

Participation evaluation

- **A range:** The student is fully engaged and highly motivated. This student is well prepared, having read the assigned texts, and has thought carefully about the texts' relation to issues raised in lecture and section. This student's ideas and questions are substantive (either constructive or critical); they stimulate class discussions. This student listens and responds to the contributions of other students.
- **B range:** The student participates consistently in discussion. This student comes to section well prepared and contributes quite regularly by sharing thoughts and questions that show insight and a familiarity with the material. This student refers to the materials discussed in lecture and shows interest in other students' contributions.
- **C range:** The student meets the basic requirements of section participation. This student is usually prepared and participates once in a while but not regularly. This student's contributions relate to the texts and the lectures and offer a few insightful ideas, but do not facilitate a discussion.

Failure to fulfill satisfactorily any of these criteria will result in a grade of "D" or below.

Paper evaluation

Six criteria for evaluating a paper:

- Substance,
- Thesis and argument structure, including introduction and conclusion,
- Use of supporting material and evidence,
- Quality of analysis, including the crucial distinction between unsupported assumptions, value judgments vs. analysis and argumentation,
- Use of quality sources,
- Quality of writing including grammatical correction, clarity, concision and persuasiveness.

Objectives for a good paper: rigorous inquiry, critical thinking, effective written argumentation.

- A range: This paper is outstanding in form and content.
 - The materials covered in class is understood in depth: the student shows that he or she has a command on the materials, including a critical understanding.
 - The thesis is clear and insightful; it is original, or it expands in a new way on ideas presented in the course.
 - The argument is unified and coherent.
 - The evidence presented in support of the argument is carefully chosen and deftly handled.
 - The analysis is complex and nuanced.
 - The sources are original texts or quality scholars' literature.
 - No grammatical mistakes, clear, precise and concise style.
- B range: The argument, while coherent, does not have the complexity, the insight, or the integrated structure of an A range paper.
 - The material covered in class is well understood: the student does not make any mistake on the materials but does not show great depth in critical understanding.

- The paper's thesis is clear.
 - The argument is coherent.
 - The paper presents evidence in support of its points.
 - The paper is reasonably well written and proofread.
- C range: This paper has some but not all of the basic components of an argumentative essay (i.e., thesis, evidence, coherent structure).

For example:

- a clear misunderstanding of some of the material covered in class, or
- no clear or incoherent thesis, or
- incoherent structure of argument, for example simply repeats points made in class without an overall argument, or
- presents no evidence in support the thesis
- no use of original texts, but only secondary or popular literature (encyclopedia...)
- poorly written and proofread.

A paper will fall below a "C" if it lacks more than one of the basic components of an argumentative essay.

Sources

- Tips for grading in the humanities, Stanford Center for Teaching and Learning website
- Introduction to the Humanities Program, STANFORD UNIVERSITY, Information for Faculty, 2005-06
<http://www.stanford.edu/dept/undergrad/ihum/instructors/>

1.6 Course Schedule

The course schedule is subject to change.

Important Dates	
Registration Begins	Nov 12
Last Day for Reinstatement	Dec 17
New Student Registration - Orientation Period	Jan 17-18
MLK, Jr. Holiday (No Classes)	Jan 21
Classes Begin	Jan 22
Late Registration Begins	Jan 23
Last Day to Register/Add/ Change Classes	Jan 29
Graduation Application Deadline	Feb 1
Last Day to Drop Classes with Tuition Refund	Feb 5
Last Day to Remove "I" Grades	Feb 29
Spring Vacation (No Classes)	Mar 17-22
Last Day for Official Withdrawal	Apr 4
Advising Period (upcoming semester)	Apr 14-25
Classes End	May 10
Final Exam Period	May 12-17
Commencement	May 17

Date	Topic
1/21	King's day
1/23	No Class
1/28	Presentation of the class
1/30	Shelley: Introduction
2/4	Shelley and Romanticism
2/6-11-13	No Class
2/10	PROSPECTUS DUE
2/18	PEER REVIEW
2/20	Tragedy, Determinism and Responsibility
2/25	Zola: Experimental Novel – PAPER DUE
2/27	Zola: Human, Animals and Morality
3/3	Hume: Empiricism and Skepticism
3/5	Design argument
3/10	A priori arguments
3/12	Catch up day
3/17-3/23	SPRING BREAK
3/24	MID-TERM EXAM
3/26	Darwin: Intro
3/31	Natural Selection
4/2	Divergence of character
4/7	Objections and Answers
4/9	Darwin and scientific methodology
4/12	PROSPECTUS DUE
4/14	Descent of man
4/16	Competition and Cooperation
4/21	PEER REVIEW
4/23	Darwin and Sociology
4/28	Darwin and Biology
4/30	Creationism and Intelligent Design
5/5	Creationism and Intelligent Design
5/7	Catch up day
	FINAL EXAM: Wednesday, 14th. 2-4 pm