

The Age of Darwin
Fall 2010, Humanities 104-03
Tuesday and Thursday 1:50-3:05
Engineering I, Room 106

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Office Hours: Tuesday 3:30-4:30 pm;
Wednesday 10-11am;
and by appointment

Course Description¹

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. First the Copernican Revolution shifted our planet out from the center of the universe. More recently, the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) may be regarded as a pivotal event, undermining the notion that nature reflected some divine purpose or design.

Darwin's theory of evolution was part of a broader shift in thinking that included literature and the arts as well as the sciences. This is reflected in the different portrayals of human nature in the two novels we will read, one written before and one during the Darwinian Revolution. *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. It represents the Romantic tradition in literature, which emphasized feeling and emotion in reaction to the Age of Reason or Enlightenment. People were becoming disenchanted with the Enlightenment's emphasis on reason, since philosophers had shown that reason alone could not demonstrate what was most important to them, the existence of God. Well before Darwin, the philosopher David Hume, in his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (1776), had shown that there are serious problems with the idea that living things could be attributed to an intelligent designer. But when design in nature is replaced by natural selection, purpose and meaning seem to evaporate as well. Such concerns are exhibited in the novel *Thérèse Raquin* (1867), which is about two lovers who the author describes as human animals, without souls, completely enslaved by their animal instincts, raising questions about the place of values in the natural world.

The humanities and the sciences overlap not only with regard to content but also with regard to methods of inquiry and persuasion. Taking Darwin and Hume's texts as our examples, we will see that scientists and philosophers construct their arguments in much the same way. Hence, it should become clear that the patterns of argument and methods of analysis taught by philosophy professors are integral to scientific inquiry. The ability to analyze arguments is also important for exposing the various attempts to base political and social programs on evolutionary theory. This skill should be important to you as citizens and human beings as well as in your professional careers.

Required Texts

Shelley, Mary, *Frankenstein*, Edited with an introduction and notes by Maruice Hindle, 2003

Hume, David, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, 2nd ed., edited by Richard Popkin.

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

Zola, Emile, *Thérèse Raquin*, Translated with an introduction by Robin Buss, Penguin Classics, 2004.

¹ The course description is from Warren Schmaus' Age of Darwin syllabus.

Objectives of the Course (as both a humanities and philosophy course)

- Students demonstrate the ability to read and interpret texts in the humanities.
- Students demonstrate the ability to produce written and oral discourse appropriate to the humanities.
- Students participate effectively in critical discussions of philosophical issues.
- Students present analyses of the issues examined in conceptual, historical, evaluative, or normative studies in the humanities.

Course Requirements and Grading

100 pts Class Presentation

150 pts Midterm Exam

175 pts First Paper (3-4)

175 pts Second Paper (3-4 pages)

175 pts Third Paper (3-4 pages)

225 pts Final Paper (4-6 pages)

Total = 1000pts

A = 900-1000, B = 800-899, C = 700-799, D = 600-699 pts and E = 0-599pts

Participation: This course will be run as a seminar. There are no points for participation, but active student participation will be a central feature of the learning experience. In order to ensure successful participation, it is important that you attend to two main tasks:

Reading Assignments: You should aim to complete the assigned reading assignments prior to the class for which they are assigned in order to contribute meaningfully to class discussion. If you have not read philosophy before, you may find the readings difficult at first. Don't give up! Most reading assignments are short enough that you can (and ought to) read each assignment more than once. As you read try to identify core claims and arguments. Take notes, jotting down questions or critiques.

Class Discussion: You should contribute to class discussions regularly and in a respectful manner. Discussion will be based on the reading assignments and will be guided in part by student presentations.

Class Presentations: Each student will give one 10-15 minute presentation. Everyone will sign up for presentations the second week of classes. Each presenter must have a one page handout and meet with me to discuss his/her handout and presentation at least one day before the actual presentation. Presentations should focus on only a small portion of the readings for class, summarizing the main argument and explaining the significance of the argument or highlighting some weakness of the argument. Both the handout and the presentation will be graded on organization and clarity as well as content (see rubric).

Grades for Class Presentations:

A = 90-100, B = 80-89, C = 70-79, D = 60-69, E = 0-59

Papers: There will be four term papers for the class. Three short ones and one slightly longer one, which will take the place of a final exam.

Term papers: The first two papers are 3-4 pages long, each worth 175pts and the last paper is a little longer, 4-6 pages and worth 225 pts. The paper topics will be assigned in advance and you will have a choice of topics on which to write. Penalty for late papers is five points for every day the paper is late unless an extension has been granted in advance.

Grades for 175 point papers

A = 157-175, B = 140-156, C = 122-139, D = 105-121, E = 0-104

Grades for 225 point paper

A = 202-225, B = 180-201, C = 157-179, D = 135-156, E = 0-134

Midterm Exam: There will be a midterm exam that will consist of three or four essay questions. You must answer three out of the four questions. You will be given a study guide in advance that will consist of 6 essay questions. Four of those essay questions will be on the exam.

Grades for the midterm exam

A = 135-150, B = 120-134, C = 105-119, D = 90-104, E = 0-89

Expectations and Classroom Policies

- Attendance is mandatory. You are allowed two unexcused absences (although I do not recommend missing any class, since the material is quite dense), after which there will be a five point penalty for every class missed that is unexcused. Absences will be excused only *before* the missed class. Absences due to religious holidays are excused, but please inform me ahead of time that you will be absent. I also recommend getting notes from someone else in the class and coming to my office hours or making an appointment to discuss the material.
- Come to class prepared and **on time**. Turn off your phone, no texting, no Internet (if applicable*), no newspapers, no talking to one another unless it is part of class discussion, no sleeping, pay attention, and engage respectfully with your classmates.
*If you plan to use your laptop for note taking, please be aware that you may not use the Internet *for any purpose* during class and you may wish to disable it if you will be otherwise tempted. Failure to abide by this requirement will result in loss of the privilege to use your laptop in class.
- Email: Please feel free to email me any time, but allow me 24 hours to respond. If you have questions about the class or the assignments check Blackboard for the information. If you cannot find it on Blackboard, then send me an email. If you have any questions about the content of the class or would simply like to discuss some philosophical thoughts of your own do not hesitate to come to my office hours or set up an appointment.

Plagiarism

- Adhere to the Illinois Institute of Technology Code of Academic Integrity:
http://www.iit.edu/student_affairs/handbook/information_and_regulations/code_of_academic_honesty.shtml
- Plagiarism will **not** be tolerated. Plagiarism is “using the ideas, data, or language of another without specific or proper acknowledgment. If you present someone's words, thoughts or data as your own, you are committing plagiarism—you are stealing. The location of the information is irrelevant: when it comes to plagiarism, information from the Internet is equivalent to information from a physical book or journal. To avoid plagiarism you must cite the original author **every time** you:
 - Use an author's exact written or spoken words. In this case, you must also identify the words by enclosing them with quotation marks or indenting the quote on both sides of the margin.
 - Paraphrase someone's written or spoken words
 - Use facts provided by someone else that are not common knowledge.
 - Make significant use of someone's ideas or theories.

It is also plagiarism to pay a person or Internet service for a paper, hand in someone else's paper as your own, or cut and paste text from the Internet to your paper without citing the source” (quoted from http://gethelp.library.upenn.edu/PORT/documentation/plagiarism_policy.html).

- If you are caught plagiarizing you will receive a zero for the assignment and you will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct.

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. Lehman and Mr. Dabbert are especially trained in working with writers for whom English is a second language.

Special Needs: Adaptation of methods and materials for students with documented disabilities will be made in consultation with the Center for Disability Resources.

Topics and Readings

Part I: Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein*

August 24: Introduction to course and Mary Shelley; Shelley, pp. v-xxxv.

August 26: *Frankenstein*. Walton's letters and Chapters 1-4

August 31: *Frankenstein*. Chapters 5-14
Handout paper topics for first short paper.

September 2: *Frankenstein*. Chapters 15-24 and Walton's last letters

Part II: David Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (Selections)

September 7: Introduction to Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*

September 9: Religion and Skepticism
Hume pp. vii-xvii, 1-2, and Part I

September 14: The Design Argument
Hume, Part II
First paper due.
Hand out second paper topics.

September 16: Problems with the Design Argument
Hume, Parts III-IV

September 21: Hume, Parts V-VI

September 23: Meaning and Religion, Hume, Part XII

September 28: Hume, Part XII (con't)

Part III: Charles Darwin

September 30: Introduction to Darwin. *Darwin*, pp. 3-13, 23-40

October 5: *Darwin* 41-49, 61-81, 285-287

Second paper due.

Hand out third paper topics.

October 7: Darwin's Argument for the Theory of Evolution through Natural Selection.
Darwin, pp. 95-111

October 12: Natural Selection and the Divergence of Character
Darwin, pp.111-35.

October 14: Darwin's Replies to Objections
Darwin, pp. 135-158.

October 19: Darwin's Replies to Objections con't.
Darwin, pp. 158-174

October 21: Midterm Exam

October 26: Darwin and the Scientific Method
Darwin, pp. 28-29, 52-57, 257-65.

October 28: Method, cont'd.
Darwin, pp. 265-70, 280-85

Moral and Social Effects of the Theory of Evolution

November 2: *The Decent of Man* on the evolution of intelligence and morality
Darwin pp. 213-22, 243-54

November 4: *The Decent of Man* con't

November 9: Competition and Cooperation
Darwin, pp. 389-408

November 11: Evolution and Ethics
Darwin, pp.501-517

Part IV: Emile Zola's *Thérèse Raquin*

November 16: Introduction to Zola. Zola pp. vii-xxxv, 1-8, *Darwin* pp. 664-70

Third paper due.

Handout final paper topics.

November 18: *Thérèse Raquin* chapters 1-6

November 23: *Thérèse Raquin* chapters 7-18

November 25: Thanksgiving Break

November 30: *Thérèse Raquin* chapters 19-25

December 2: *Thérèse Raquin* chapters 26-32

December 6 **Final paper due in my mailbox by 4pm.**