

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO  
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY  
Undergraduate Course Outline 2013-14

Philosophy 2350F  
The Darwin Revolution

<p>Fall Term 2015 M 2:30-3:30, W 2:30-4:30 Location: WL 258</p>	<p>Instructor: Eric Desjardins Stevenson Hall 2131, Office Hours: Tu 2:00-3:00, F 11:30-12:30 519-661-2111 x.87769 edesjar3@uwo.ca</p>
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**DESCRIPTION**

Charles Darwin is one of the most important figures of the modern world. His thinking about evolution has revolutionized not only biology, but also psychology, sociology and economics. This course retraces the steps leading from the foundational thinking of early Greek philosophers through the intellectual breakthroughs of the Renaissance to Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species*, one of the most important books ever published. This will lead us into a detailed examination of Darwin's work and responses to it. Along the way we will examine debates in biology, geology, and the philosophy of science that had a profound impact on Darwin's thinking. Some of the figures we will meet in this section include Aristotle, Descartes, Buffon, George Cuvier, Lamarck, Charles Lyell, Robert Chambers, John Herschel, and T.H. Huxley. In the final section of the course we will turn our attention to the Modern Evolutionary Synthesis and more contemporary discussions in philosophy of biology about the notion of species, the unit of selection, biological functions and the evolution of human beings.

**TEXTS**

1. Charles Darwin: *On the Origin of Species*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition (available from UWO bookstore or at the following website: <http://darwin-online.org.uk/>)
2. Extra material made available on OWL

**OBJECTIVES**

The aim of the course is to give students a good understanding of the conceptual history, structure and significance of the theory of evolution by natural selection, and to develop students' skills in analyzing and constructing complex arguments both in discussion and in writing. By approaching the topic of evolution historically, this course aims to make evolutionary biology accessible to the non-specialist, so previous study of biology is not required. Those who already have a good grasp of contemporary evolutionary theory will enrich their understanding of its complexities and significance, and of both historical and current disagreements about evolution among biologists as well as philosophers of biology. This course is also a great opportunity to develop advanced skills in identifying and formulating philosophical issues and leading discussions.

## **REQUIREMENTS**

The final grade will be based upon the following scheme:

Leading discussion	20%
Discussion summary	10%
Mid-term paper (~1500 words)	25%
Term paper (~1800 words)	35%
Participation	10%

## **AUDIT**

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

The **Department of Philosophy Policies** which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website at <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html>. It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

This information appears on Page 3, under Support Services at the link: <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/exam/courseoutlines.pdf>