



Paul Bond, Charles Darwin in a Case of Natural Selection, c. 2015

VPAS 3340-001 (24229)
Writing in the Arts:
Charles Darwin and Darwinism in the Arts
Spring 2021
Dr. Charissa N. Terranova
T-Th 4:00-5:15 pm/Remote-Virtual-Online

Office Hours: Online by appointment
Contact: terranova@utdallas.edu
www.charissaterranova.com

Description

This is a writing-intensive course focusing on readings about the relationship between art, design, and natural evolution. Readings focus on Charles Darwin, organic and natural form, eugenics, natural evolution, natural and sexual selection, the natural sciences, and art and design therein.

The class consists of ten modules, each of which requires students to read an essay, form two questions based on the reading, and write a 500-word reader response essay. As a “response” students are required to both summarize the essay and hone their voice as a writer. Sharpening one’s voice as a writer can take many forms, the most obvious of which is taking a position vis-à-vis the author. This position should be embodied in a thesis statement. The goal of these writing assignments is threefold: to show reading comprehension of a text about art, culture, and evolution; write critically about that information; and persuade the would-be audience of that critical position.

Modality and Platform

This course’s modality is “fully online,” which means that instruction is delivered online synchronously and asynchronously according to a specified schedule. The instructor delivers the instruction from home or the office. Students complete the course at a distance. Attendance at the professor’s online lectures and the following discussions is encouraged but optional. Classes meet through Microsoft Teams and recorded lectures will be available at elearning.

Organizational Elements and Course Grade

Course activities are organized around ten week-and-a-half long modules with the following four elements.

- Element 1 Specific Questions Related to Reading (30% of Final Grade)
 - Complete the assigned reading.
 - Students submit two specific questions related to the reading to elearning by 10 am of day of lecture/discussion.

- Students attend lecture/discussion (optional).
- Element 2 First Draft of Essay (35% of Final Grade)
 - Students write first draft of 500-word essays in response to reading assignments.
 - Students submit draft to elearning.
- Element 3: Editing
 - Professor returns edited essay to students through UTD email.
- Element 4: Final Polished Essay (35% of Final Grade)
 - Students correct essays based on professor's comments.
 - Student submit final polished 500-word essays to professor at elearning.

Writing Short Essays

For each thematic module, students write a 500-word essay. Professor marks down essays that exceed or fall short of this length accordingly. In these essays students recount the main ideas of the assigned reading while also taking a position and developing a thesis statement in relationship to the text. The goals of these papers are to: 1.) show that you have completed and understood the reading assignment and 2.) improve your writing skills. Each assignment should be formatted according to the following requirements:

- Documents should be written in **Word Perfect**. **Do not save files in any other format.**
- Left-hand justified heading with name of student, course number, professor's name, date
- Followed by a title, center justified underlined or italicized
- Double spaced
- 12 pt. font
- 500 words
- Do not use the first person as in, for example, "I thought the essay was terrific!"
- Do not use the passive voice. Write objectively using the active voice.
 - Passive voice: "The lecture was given."
 - Active voice: "Cynthia gave the lecture."
- Summarizing an essay requires one to:
 - Complete the reading of the essay first.
 - Think about it.
 - Develop a position in relationship to it.
 - Write a short outline of summary and argument.
 - Write essay.
- Avoid walking your reader through each sentence and paragraph of the essay. Summarize; be synthetic.
- Model your writing after that of sophisticated journalism outlets, such as the *New York Times*, *New Yorker*, *Atlantic Monthly*, or *Harper's*.
- Avoid hyperbole as in, for example, "I thought the essay was terrific!"
- Read your paper out loud to ensure clarity.
- Upload your final Word document to appropriate folder in each module at elearning.

Goals

Students enrolled in this class gain the following:

- 1.) The ability to clearly and concisely write about art, architecture, and the influences of evolutionary theory therein.
- 2.) Improvement of writing.
- 3.) Improvement of English grammar.
- 4.) Knowledge of the history of art and architecture, evolutionary theory, and Charles Darwin.

Readings

The reading assignments are available at elearning reserves.

Schedule

Tuesday January 19 Introduction to Class

Module 1 The Evolution of Evolution: The Aging of Darwin's Ideas

Essay: Frank J. Sulloway, "The Evolution of Charles Darwin," *Smithsonian Magazine*, December 2005.

Due Dates:

- Thursday January 21 Lecture and/or Discussion
- Monday January 25 Draft of Essay 1 Due
- Friday January 29 Professor Returns Edited Essay
- Monday February 1 Final Essay 1 Due

Module 2 Art and Evolution from the Perspective of Science

Essay: Tom Lubbock, "Art and Evolution," *The Lancet*, Supplement, Vol. 372, Special Issue S14-20, December 01, 2008

Due Dates:

- Tuesday February 2 Lecture and/or Discussion
- Friday February 5 Draft of Essay 2 Due
- Tuesday February 9 Professor Returns Edited Essay
- Thursday February 11 Final Essay 2 Due

Module 3 Life, Vibrations, and Art-and-Science in the Nineteenth Century

Essay: Robert Michael Brain, "Protoplasmia: Huxley, Haeckel, and the Vibratory Organism in Late Nineteenth-Century Science and Art," *The Art of Evolution: Darwin, Darwinisms, and Visual Culture*, Barbara Larson and Fae Brauer, eds. (Hanover, NH: 2009) 92-123.

Due Dates:

- Tuesday February 16 Lecture and/or Discussion
- Friday February 19 Draft of Essay 3 Due
- February 22 Professor Returns Edited Essay
- Wednesday February 24 Final Essay 3 Due

Module 4 Evolution, Eugenics, and Art

Essay: Fae Brauer, "Framing Darwin: A Portrait of Eugenics," *The Art of Evolution: Darwin, Darwinisms, and Visual Culture*, Barbara Larson and Fae Brauer, eds. (Hanover, NH: 2009) 124-154.

Due Dates:

- Thursday February 25 Lecture and/or Discussion
- Monday March 1 Draft of Essay 4 Due
- Thursday March 4 Professor Returns Edited Essay
- Monday March 8 Final Essay 4 Due

Module 5 Photographic Portraiture and Eugenics

Essay: Shawn Michelle Smith, "The Art of Scientific Propaganda," *Art, Sex, and Eugenics: Corpus Delecti*, Fae Brauer and Anthea Callen, eds. (New York: Routledge/Ashgate, 2008) 65-96.

Due Dates:

- Tuesday March 9 Lecture and/or Discussion

- Friday March 12 Draft of Essay 5 Due
- Monday March 15 Professor Returns Edited Essay
- Monday March 22 Final Essay 5 Due

Module 6 The Darwin Effect

Essay: Linda Nochlin, "The Darwin Effect: Introduction," *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide*, Vol. 2, Issue 2, Spring 2003.

Due Dates:

- Tuesday March 23 Lecture and/or Discussion
- Friday March 26 Draft of Essay 6 Due
- March 29 Professor Returns Edited Essay
- Wednesday March 31 Final Essay 6 Due

Module 7 Victorian Ideas about Gender: Darwin and Women

Essay: Evelleen Richards, "Darwin and the Descent of Women," *The Wider Domain of Evolutionary Thought*, David Oldroyd and Ian Langham, eds. (Dordrecht, NL: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1983) 57-112.

Due Dates:

- Thursday April 1 Lecture and/or Discussion
- Monday April 5 Draft of Essay 7 Due
- Thursday April 8 Professor Returns Edited Essay
- Friday April 9 Final Essay 7 Due

Module 8 Sexual Selection, Darwin's Other Concept of Selection

Essay: Laurence Shafe, "Why is the peacock's tail so beautiful?" *Darwin and Theories of Aesthetics and Cultural History*, Barbara Larson and Sabine Flach, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2016) 37-51.

Due Dates:

- Tuesday April 13 Lecture and/or Discussion
- Thursday April 15 Draft of Essay 8 Due
- Saturday April 17 Professor Returns Edited Essay
- Monday April 19 Final Essay 8 Due

Module 9 Charles Darwin's Influence on Modern Architecture

Essay: David Van Zanten, "Louis Sullivan, Herbert Spencer, and the Medium of Architecture," *Design in the Age of Darwin: from William Morris to Frank Lloyd Wright*, Stephen F. Eisenman (Chicago: Northwestern University, 2008) 27-38.

Due Dates:

- Tuesday April 20 Lecture and/or Discussion
- Friday April 23 Draft of Essay 9 Due
- Monday April 26 Professor Returns Edited Essay
- Tuesday April 27 Final Essay 9 Due

Module 10 Art, Evolution, and the Anthropocene

Essay: Fae Brauer, "The Janus Face of Evolution: Degeneration, Devolution, and Extinction in the Anthropocene," *Picturing Evolution and Extinction: Regeneration and Degeneration in Modern Visual Culture*, Fae Brauer and Serena Keshavjee (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015) xv-xlii.

Due Dates:

- Thursday April 29 Lecture and/or Discussion

- Monday May 3 Draft of Essay 10 Due
- Thursday May 6 Professor Returns Edited Essay
- Friday May 7 Final Essay 10 Due