HON 172: The Human Event, II

FALL 2005

MW 10:40 – 11:55 (Irish A 116), or
TTh 10:40-11:55 (MB 114)

Office Hours: MTTh, 12:00 – 1:30 and
other times by appointment.

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"There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers,
having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or
into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according
to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless
forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being,
evolved"

Charles Robert Darwin, On The Origin of Species, 1859

This course allows you to build on the foundation of self-directed learning you
established in HON 171. This section of the course is designed to particularly
concentrate on the place of science in modern thought. The approach we take will be
tripartite: an examination of the development of modes of scientific thinking through an
examination of the philosophy of science, an examination of the structure and logic of a
particular scientific idea (in this case, Darwin’s theory of evolution through natural
selection) and it’s contemporary impacts (e.g. eugenics), and finally an examination of
the modern resonances of the idea often in fields outside the sciences. All this will be
achieved through communal reading, discussion and writing on a series of primary
texts.

Learning Outcomes:

- Broadening of your cultural background and historical awareness, particular
  with relation to scientific modes of thought
- Cultivation of multi-disciplinary perspectives
- Development of frameworks for self-directed learning and working within a
  pluralist world
- Improvement of skills in close reading, critical discussion and evaluation &
  construction of oral and written arguments.

Texts:

The following works are required for purchase and are available at the ASU Bookstore
or online. Please only purchase these editions. All additional readings will be made
available online; please print them out and bring them to class.

- Dawkins, The Selfish Gene
- Dennett, Darwin’s Dangerous Idea
- Byatt, Angels and Insects
- Lewontin, The Triple Helix
- Vonnegut, Galapagos
Supplementary Resources:

- The class website (on Blackboard) provides links to online readings, background material, and announcements.
- The Barrett Writing Center is available to assist all Barrett Honors College students with papers for HON classes only. Directed by BHC faculty and staffed by BHC writing tutors who themselves have completed both HON 171 and 172, the Barrett Writing Center offers small group workshops and individual tutoring on writing papers for your HON courses. Its goal is to help you improve your lifelong writing and critical thinking skills, so please take advantage of its services. Go to the BWC web site at http://honors.asu.edu/ and click on Writing/Computer Support. Under Barrett Writing Center, you then can access updated tutoring and workshop schedules, appointment information, academic background on the staff, and internet links related to academic essay writing.

Reading Texts:

*The Human Event* is a reading-intensive course and I am willing to guarantee that you will do more reading of primary sources than in any other course you possibly take in your early college career. You are expected to come to each class having read the assignment carefully. Many of the works we shall study are philosophical or scientific in nature, and thus require close and concentrated reading. Casual skimming will (a) not be helpful to you in discussing these works, (b) will inhibit you from developing strong paper topics, and (c) cause you to fail in-class quizzes; thus your final grade will suffer. As a minimum following completing a reading, you should be able to answer the following questions:

1. What is the key question being addressed in the work you have read?
2. What are the main inferences/conclusions of the author?
3. What are the main assumptions made by the writer?
4. What are the implications if we take the author seriously? What if not?

Assignments:

- Participation – 35%
- Unannounced Quizzes – 10%
- Papers – 55%

Participation: (35%)

*The Human Event* is, by design, a seminar course; you are expected both to have carefully read the assigned reading and to engage in discussion during class-time. As participation is worth 35% of your final grade, it is obvious that failure to participate will result in a grade no better than a ‘D’ no matter how good your written work may be. Remember, *coming to class and having read the assigned reading do not count as participation*; you must contribute to the discussions. In addition, arrival to class late, sleeping during class, failure to bring your text to class (or not actively using it!), or conversing with neighbors will all immediately and without warning result in a zero for participation during a given class, no matter how much you may talk in that class.

A: The student receiving this grade participates extensively in the majority of class discussions. She arrives in class each day thoroughly prepared with written comments and questions on the assigned reading. At least occasionally she initiates the discussion, without waiting for the instructor to do so. When towards the end of a discussion the instructor asks for further comments, she almost always has some. She does not, however, try to dominate the class.
Instead she listens carefully to the remarks made by fellow class members, and responds as readily to these as she does to the instructor’s questions.

B: The student in this grade range participates in most discussions, although not as fully or reliably as the student described above. She gives evidence of having done the reading. At least part of the time she helps the discussion along by raising her own questions. She pays attention to the comments of her peers.

C: This student participates only intermittently during class periods (perhaps only every second or third class). She is more willing to discuss broad, general questions than to engage in concrete analysis of an assigned text. She is sometimes unprepared, and lacks interest in the ideas of other members of the class.

D: This student seldom contributes to class discussions. While her contributions may be useful, they are infrequent.

E (0%): Student never (or only occasionally) speaks.

I do understand that some individuals are, by nature, quiet and perhaps feel uncomfortable talking in group situations. I do not cold-call students, so the onus is on you to participate or risk losing grade-points.

Please also note, that you should aim for a balance between active contribution and active listening – the class room should not be dominated by single voices.

Quizzes: (10%)

Assigned readings are subject to up to ten unannounced quizzes held promptly at the beginning of class. Quizzes will be graded on a pass/fail basis. Students who pass every quiz will receive a final quiz grade of 10; those who miss or fail one quiz will receive a 9; two, a 8; three, a 7; and so forth. If you appear in class while a quiz is being taken, you will not be allowed enter until the quiz has been graded. A missed quiz counts as a failed quiz, and quizzes cannot be made up.

Papers: (15%, 25%, 15% = 55%)

Papers should be 1500 to 1750 words in length (i.e. approximately six to seven pages in length) and no longer. Your paper must present a clearly organized and persuasive argument relating to the material we have read. You must develop an opinion about the work and use evidence from the text to substantiate your claims. As this course aims to have you think critically about primary sources, i.e. our assigned readings, no secondary material may be utilized in your papers, as you are being judged on the quality of your ideas, the form in which you present those ideas, and your use of textual evidence. Guidelines for thesis development are provided at the class website, and we will discuss these early in the semester.

Easy ways to lose grade points on a paper:

- Submission of a paper that is above the length requirement loses one letter grade.
- Submission of a paper that is below the length requirement will result in failure of the assignment (0%).
- Excessive grammatical and spelling errors (including misspelling characters names, places or the title of works) will be punished to varying degrees depending on severity.
Failure to provide a **completed** draft for peer review will result in failure of the assignment (0%).

Failure to submit a paper by the due time and date will result in the loss of one letter grade for that assignment per day, or part thereof (even if it is only a few minutes late).

Beyond these requirements, I am a fair grader who expects you to play close attention to the content and form of your written work. In general, I tend to return papers with more negative than positive comments – this does not mean that your paper was excessively “bad,” merely that given time and space constraints I am identifying the issues which I feel you can address and thus improve your future writing.

A plea for understanding. HON 171/172 professors grade papers from a large number of students every assignment. Each paper takes approximately 45 minutes to read, digest, comment upon and grade. This amounts to many hours of **continuous** work. Add to this our regular amount of time spent in class, on class preparation, university service, breaks and home life (yes, we have a life outside the BHC) and I think you can appreciate that papers cannot be returned as rapidly as we all would like, and certainly not within a week. Please don’t bother to ask me when papers will be returned – I work as fast as I can! This also puts a time constraint on the level of detail I can put in written comments. *I strongly suggest that you come see me if you need further guidance; improving your writing (and thus your final grade) depends on a working relationship between you, me and the Barrett Writing Center (the latter being especially important).*

Some clarifications:

**A:** An A paper is outstanding in *every* way: in the originality of its thought, in the persuasiveness of its argument, and in the clarity and power of its writing. There are no grammatical and spelling errors. The thesis goes beyond what has been discussed in class and everything in the essay relates to that thesis. Each paragraph has a topic sentence. On average, five to ten percent of the papers in any given assignment will deserve an A grade; I will leave you to work out how many that is within a class of this size.

**B:** A B paper is approximately what is to be expected of a student in an honors course. The prose is generally clear and readable, but there are some grammatical problems and some sentences may be awkward. The essay shows serious thought beyond class discussions, and for the most part is well organized.

**C:** An essay in this range is neither especially bad nor distinctively good. It may have a promising thesis but the argument is unconvincing or confusing. It may show little or no original thought.

**D:** D papers have serious weaknesses in content and style. There is no clear thesis and no movement beyond class concepts. The writing style is difficult to read.

**Assorted Policies and Procedures:**

*Attendance:* You are allowed two absences (excused or otherwise) without penalty. Three absences result in a one letter grade reduction of your participation score. Missing four classes (i.e. two weeks of the semester) will result in immediate failure of the course. Note that arriving more than five minutes late counts as an absence.
Cell Phones: I switch my phone off when I come to class; You should do so as well. If your phone rings during class, your participation grade will suffer.

Plagiarism: As a student, you are expected not to engage in any form of plagiarism, which according to the ASU Student Code of Conduct, "means representing the words or ideas of another as one’s own." Plagiarism is an act of fraud. It involves both stealing someone else’s work and lying about it afterward. Note, that for an act to count as plagiarism, the representation does not have to be intentional. With the advent of the Internet, it has become easier for students to plagiarize. However, somewhat ironically, it has become easier for instructors to detect this form of dishonesty. The faculty of the Barrett Honors College have initiated the use of internet-based services to detect plagiarism. As such, we have a high probability of detecting fraud, and regularly catch plagiarists using it. You will be required to submit printed and electronic copies of all papers. Upon detection of plagiarism, you will automatically be assigned a course grade of XE which "denotes failure through academic dishonesty and may not be appealed through the grade appeal process." Thus, as a minimum, you will fail this course, will not be able to repeat it, and will be thus unable to graduate from the Barrett Honors College. An ‘XE’ grade on your transcript will also preclude you from entry into any reputable graduate or professional school. The bottom-line is, DON'T PLAGIARIZE!

Grade Appeals: Grades can only be contested in writing (not by e-mail) and not before the class period following return of the paper. Please enclose all relevant material (i.e. the paper as I returned it to you) with your appeal which should engage the comments and criticisms I have made. Avoid claiming that because you worked hard, you deserve an ‘A’ – it is assumed that you worked hard.

Further Action: Students are directed to the Barrett Honors College’s Procedure on Student Academic Grievances at http://www.asu.edu/honors/docs/GradeAppeal.doc.

Miscellanea: BHC professors do not grade on a curve nor do we engage in any grade inflation. No extra credit is available. Professors can initiate a grade change for plagiarism up to two years after the completion of a course. This syllabus is a contract between you and I - by attending this class you declare that you have read and understood all the above.

SYLLABUS OF READINGS

PART I: THINKING SCIENTIFICALLY BEFORE DARWIN

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 Aug 22nd</td>
<td>Initial meeting – Prospects and expectations.</td>
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<td>Introduction to the “Scientific Revolution” and aftermath.</td>
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<td>2 Aug 29th</td>
<td>Galileo, Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina</td>
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<td>Bacon, Novum Organum</td>
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<td>3 Sep 5th</td>
<td>No class. Essay guidelines will be distributed online.</td>
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<td>Descartes, <em>Discourse on Method</em> (Pt 1 – 4), <em>Rules for the Direction of the Mind</em> and <em>Fifth Meditation</em></td>
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1 http://www.asu.edu/aad/manuals/sta/sta104-01.html
2 http://www.asu.edu/studentlife/judicial/integrity.html
3 We will be meeting in the downstairs conference room in Irish.
4 Sep 12th  M T  Kant, “What is Enlightenment?” & Franklin & Lavoisier, “Report of the Commissioners Charged by the King to Examine Animal Magnetism”  

5 Sep 19th  M T  Hume, “Of the Immortality of the Soul” & “Of Suicide”  
W Th  Hume, “On Miracles”

6 Sep 26th  M T  Herschel, *Preliminary Discourse*  
W Th  Peer Review of Paper #1

**Paper #1 due electronically, Saturday 24th at 11:00pm.**

**PART II: DARWIN**

7 Oct 3rd  M T  Introduction to the “Darwinian Revolution”³  
W Th  Darwin, *Origin of Species* (Ch’s 1 – 4)

8 Oct 10th  M T  Darwin, *Origin of Species* (Ch’s 6, 9, 10)  
W Th  Darwin, *Origin of Species* (Ch 14), Arnold, *Dover Beach* and extracts from Tennyson, *In Memoriam*.

9 Oct 17th  M T  Darwin, *Descent of Man* (Chs 5, 6 & 7)  
W Th  Darwin, *Descent of Man* (Chs 8, 19, 20, 21)

10 Oct 24th  M T  Byatt, *Morpho Eugenia* (in *Angels and Insects*)  
W Th  Galton, “Eugenics” (p 1 – 3) & Online exploration.

11 Oct 31st  M T  Huxley, *Evolution and Ethics*  
W Th  Peer Review of Paper #2

**Paper #2 due electronically, Friday November 4th at 11:00pm.**

**PART III: A REVOLUTION IN THOUGHT?**

12 Nov 7th  M T  Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*  
W Th  Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (to be decided)

13 Nov 14th  M T  Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (to be decided)  
W Th  Dennett, *Darwin’s Dangerous Idea* (to be decided)

14 Nov 21st  M T  Dennett, *Darwin’s Dangerous Idea* (to be decided)  
W Th  No class – Thanksgiving

15 Nov 28th  M T  Lewontin, *The Triple Helix* (Chs 1 – 3)  
W Th  Vonnegut, *Galapagos*

16 Dec 5th  M T  Wrapping it all up …

**Paper #3 due electronically, Friday at 11:00pm.**