

## Fiat Lux Colloquium: History 19-5

### The Scopes Trial: Evolution Debates in America

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Office Hours M 10-11, W 3:30-5 or by appointment, or whenever you can find me

This is a discussion course. We will read from a collection on *The Scopes Trial*, watch and debate the movie “Inherit the Wind,” check out some websites, and discuss modern confrontations of evolution and creationism (or “intelligent design”). We spend our last two weeks on a more recent trial (2005) on the place of evolution and intelligent design in the schools. The only requirement for the course is to read the assigned pages and to participate in discussions and debates, and to prepare and play roles in “trials.” We meet only five times, and you should be present each week. If you **must** miss a class, you can make up for it by writing a 3-4 page paper on a relevant topic and presenting it to the class. If, **for any reason**, you miss a second session, you will be dropped from the class.

**Sources** (Some of these may change after the course gets underway).

Jeffrey P. Moran, *The Scopes Trial: A Brief History with Documents*, available from Ackerman bookstore

“Inherit The Wind” (1960 movie), available in undergrad library.

<http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/scopes/scopes.htm> See especially some excerpts from George Hunter’s 1914 textbook, *A Civic Biology*, essays of the famous reporter H. L. Mencken, and John Scopes’s reflections forty years later.

[www.themonkeytrial.com](http://www.themonkeytrial.com) (A detailed refutation of “Inherit the Wind” (which does not in fact claim to be a documentary).

<http://pewforum.org/events/index.php?EventID=R93> (Press forum by Edward Larson on evolution debates and American education).

See also a brief article by Stephen Barr arguing that Roman Catholicism has no trouble with evolution at <http://firstthings.com/ftissues/ft0510/opinion/barr.html> and response by Robert Bennett at <http://www.catholicintl.com/noncatholicissues/benbar-evo.htm>

Particularly helpful for our discussions of contemporary issues is the 2005 Dover, Pennsylvania intelligent design trial, a challenge of the Dover School Board's use of an ID textbook, *Of Pandas and People*. The entire transcript of this trial may be found at [http://www2.ncseweb.org/wp/?page\\_id=5](http://www2.ncseweb.org/wp/?page_id=5) Both sides relied extensively on expert witnesses; for the prosecution: the biologist Kenneth Miller, paleontologist Kevin Padian, "scientific philosopher" Robert Pennock, and educationist Brian Alters; and for the defense (the Dover school board): nuclear chemist Michael Behe, microbiologist Scott Minnich, philosopher of science Steve Fuller, and educationist Dick Carpenter.

### Assignments and topics

Week 1. 9 January. Reading [**Please read this before the first class meeting**]: Moran, *Scopes Trial*, 1-24 (editors introduction), 74-75 (Butler law), 186-188 (from George W. Hunter, *A Civic Biology*); also read Edward Larson's introduction and the press session at <http://pewforum.org/events/index.php?EventID=R93> (total reading of a few hours).

Week 2. 23 January. Reading: Moran, 107-138 (trial testimony on need for expert testimony vs. plain meaning of text). Also Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker*, [chaps. 1-2, pp. 1-41](#) [Dawkins, author also of *The Selfish Gene* and *The God Delusion*, is known for his arguments that Darwinian evolution is inconsistent with any theistic religion]; Philip Johnson, *Reason in the Balance*, [chaps. 3-4, pp. 51-88](#) [Johnson is a law professor whose many books, beginning with *Darwin on Trial* have been very important for the intelligent design movement.]

We will discuss how different parties in Tennessee understood the role of plain sense vs expert knowledge in the courtroom and in the Bible, then debate whether Dawkins and Johnson demonstrate a real inconsistency between evolution and theistic religion.

Week 3. 6 February. Reading: Moran, 139-161 (Darrow questions Bryan). View movie "Inherit the Wind" and read critique of it at [www.themonkeytrial.com](http://www.themonkeytrial.com) We will stage a trial to decide whether the movie involves defamation of William Jennings Bryan or the Southern Baptist church or the town fathers of Dayton, Tennessee.

Week 4. 20 February. Discussion of Dover, Pennsylvania trial. Interview with defense expert Steve Fuller (played by me).

Week 5. 5 March. Re-enactment of Dover testimonies, focusing on expert testimonies.

**Further Reading.** (First three historical books, then three books critical of ID, three books defending ID, and two efforts to reconcile science and (mainly Christian) faith.

Edward J. Larson, *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate over Science and Religion* (1998)

Ronald Numbers, *The Creationists: The Evolution of Scientific Creationism* (1993)

Edward Humes, *Monkey Girl: Evolution, Education, and the Battle for America's Soul* (2007).

Robert T. Pennock, *Tower of Babel: The Evidence against the New Creationism* (1999)

John Brockman, ed., *Intelligent Thought: Science vs. the Intelligent Design Movement* (2006)

Michael Shermer, *Why Darwin Matters: The Case against Intelligent Design* (2006)

Philip Johnson, *Darwin on Trial* (1993)

Michael Behe, *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* (1996)

William Dembski, ed., *Darwin's Nemesis: Philip Johnson and the Intelligent Design Movement* (2006)

Kenneth R. Miller, *Finding Darwin's God: A Scientist's Search for Common Ground between God and Evolution* (2000)

Francis Collins, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief* (2006)