

**Soc/STS 353**  
**Bio-Social Controversy**

**Spring 2009**  
**McAulay**

*Bio-Social* controversy is a complex topic. In the context of this course, it suggests a potential disconnection between biological and sociological explanations as well as possible fault lines between science and other socio-cultural domains. **Specifically in this class we will consider a series of disputes provoked by application of Darwinian evolution through natural selection to human affairs.**

Bio-social *controversy* also implies the presence of scientific disagreements that come to public attention. Integral here is the idea that certain “scientific” disputes become controversial precisely due to their perceived social and political significance. Public clashes pitting Evolution against Creationism (or, more recently, “intelligent design”) are only the most visible of such contemporary conflicts bearing on the cultural impact of Darwinian thinking. Other recent disputes over Sociobiology or Evolutionary Psychology center around Darwinian accounts of gender, sexual difference, and race as well as the claimed evolutionary roots of interpersonal violence, sexual coercion, and ethnic conflict.

The study of bio-social controversies is important not only order to consider who is “right” and who is “wrong” but because of what these conflicts may reveal regarding politically laden assumptions about *human nature*. In the bargain we have an opportunity to discern something about the relationship between science, interests, power and rhetoric -- especially when it comes to Darwinian disputes waged in public arenas.

**Required Books** (Available in the Vassar Bookstore or excerpted on Blackboard\*)

Dorothy Nelkin, The Creation Controversy  
Thomas Woodson, Doubts About Darwin\*  
Peter Singer, A Darwinian Left  
Martin Daly and Margo Wilson, Homicide\*  
Larry Arnhart, Darwinian Conservatism  
Simon Baron-Cohen, The Essential Difference  
David J. Buller, Adapting Minds  
Nicholas Wade, Before the Dawn

**Course Requirements:**

Paper #1 on Intelligent Design or Darwin’s Politics	(30%) due Feb. 23
Paper #2 on Violence or Mating Strategies	(30%) due April 10
Paper #3 on Sexuality, Ethnicity or Race	(20%) due May 11
Attendance and Participation	(20%)

Option #1: Weight assigned to second or third papers can be adjusted + or - 10% as long as the combined total = 100% with no paper worth less than 20% and A/P no less than 10%.

Option #2: The first paper (30%) + A/P grade (20%) and a single final paper worth 50% of your course grade. Requires formal discussion with the instructor and an approved paper proposal.

**Course Outline and Reading Assignments:**

Jan. 22     **Overview of the Course** [See detailed reading listed page 5 below]

**Darwinism and Anti-Darwinism as Worldviews**

Jan. 29     **Creation-Evolution: Four Frames of Reference**  
Read: Dorothy Nelkin, *The Creation Controversy*  
Theory Packet: “Four Frames of Reference”  
Creation-Evolution material (distributed in class)

Feb. 5      **Intelligent Design and Scientific Rhetoric**  
Read: Excerpts from Thomas Woodward, *Doubts about Darwin*  
Phillip Johnson, “Science and Pseudoscience”  
Jerry Coyne, “The Case Against ID” (pp. 31-33)  
Intelligent Design Packet (Distributed and on Blackboard)

Feb. 12     **Darwinian Politics**  
Read: John McGinnis, “The Origin of Conservatism”  
Larry Arnhart: *Darwinian Conservatism* (pp. 1-34; 122-129)  
Peter Singer: *A Darwinian Left*  
John West: Excerpts from *Darwin’s Conservatives* plus  
additional articles listed at the end of this syllabus

Prospective Paper Topics Distributed [due Monday February 23]

**Evolutionary Psychology: Promise and Discontents I**

Feb. 19     **Interpersonal Violence**  
Read: Martin Daly and Margo Wilson, *Homicide*  
(Preface; Chapters 1, 2, 6-10)



- April 9     **Darwin, Homosexuality and the Gender Binary**  
Read: Chanler Burr, Excerpts from *A Separate Creation*  
      Hamer and Copeland, Excerpt from *The Science of Desire*  
      David Halperin, “‘Homosexuality’: A Cultural Construct”  
      See Sex/Gender Controversies Pack (distributed)
- April 16    **Toward A Darwinian Sociology (Ethnicity and Conflict Theory)**  
Read: van den Berghe, Excerpts from *The Ethnic Phenomenon*  
      Lopreato & Crippen, “The Clannish Brain” (Chapter 9 from  
      *Crisis in Sociology: The Need for Darwin*)
- April 23    **Race: Biological Category or Social Construction?**  
Read: Nicholas Wade, *Before the Dawn* (Selected Sections)  
      See Race and Bio-Social Controversy Pack (listed below)
- April 30    **Athleticism, Intelligence and Natural Selection**  
Read: Jon Entine, Excerpts from *Taboo*  
      Malcolm Gladwell, “The Sports Taboo”  
      Steven Pinker, “Groups and Genes”

Prospective Paper Topics Distributed [due Friday May 11]

Bob McAulay  
BH 304D [x5509]  
email = [mcaulay@vassar.edu](mailto:mcaulay@vassar.edu)  
Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 1-3 pm  
or by appointment

**Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities who are registered with the Office of Disability and Support Services. Students in need of disability accommodations should schedule an appointment with me early in the semester to discuss any accommodations for this course that have been approved by Office of Disability and Support Services, as indicated in your DSS accommodation letter.**

**Detailed Reading Assignments** (Distributed or on Blackboard)

**Creation-Evolution:** Reading Assignment for Thursday, January 29

- a) Dorothy Nelkin, *The Creation Controversy*
- b) ICR, Impact Nos. 95-96, "Summary of Scientific Evidence for Creation"
- c) Kenneth Miller, "Answers to the Standard Creationist Arguments"
- d) The 4 Frameworks Handout Packet that includes:
  - a) Karl Popper, except from *Conjectures and Refutations*
  - b) David Hess, "The Strong Program" and "Interests Analysis"
  - c) Sara Mills, "Power/Knowledge"
  - d) Joseph Gusfield, "Rhetoric and Science"

**Intelligent Design:** Assignment for Thursday, February 5

- a) Woodward, *Doubts About Darwin*: Preface, Forward, + Chapters 1-6 + 8.
- b) Phillip E. Johnson, "Science and Pseudo Science" (Excerpt from *DOT*)
- c) Jerry Coyne, "Unintelligent Design" (TNR article, Part VI, pp. 31-33 required)  
-- parts I-V are recommended if you have the time
- d) ID packet which includes the pieces by Johnson, Coyne (above) plus others by Dennett, Holt, Ruse, and the Kitcher-Johnson exchange

*Recommended Reading* (available on Blackboard)

- Ronald L. Numbers, "Intelligent Design" (from *The Creationists*)  
Stephen J. Gould: "Impeaching a Self Appointed Judge"  
Phillip Johnson, "The Religion of the Blind Watchmaker" (reply to Gould)

**Darwinian Politics:** Assignment for Thursday, February 12

- a) John O. McGinnis, "The Origins of Conservatism" (*National Review* 12/22/97)
- b) Larry Arnhart, *Darwinian Conservatism* (pp. 1-34; 122-129); Ch 3 (Recommended)
- c) John West, *Darwin's Conservatives: The Misguided Quest* (excerpt distributed)
- d) Peter Singer, *A Darwinian Left: Politics, Evolution & Cooperation*
- e) Herb Gintis, Amazon Review of *The Biology of Moral Systems* (distributed)
- f) Roger Lewin, "Evolution's New Heretics" (distributed)

**Adapted Violence?:** Assignment for Thursday, February 19

- Martin Daly and Margo Wilson, *Homicide* (Chapters 1,2; 6-10,12).  
Recommended: Daly and Wilson, "The 'Cinderella Effect'" (distributed)

**Darkness Scandal:** Assignment for Thursday, February 26

- a) Wrangham and Peterson, "Raiding" [Excerpt from *Demonic Males*]
- b) Napoleon Chagnon, "Life Histories, Blood Revenge, and Warfare..."
- c) R. Brian Ferguson, "Do Yanomamö Killers Have More Kids?"
- d) "Are Yanomami Violence and Warfare Natural Human Efforts to Maximize Reproductive Fitness" Issue 11 in Welsch and Endicott, *Taking Sides: Cultural Anthropology* (pp. 222-223); Dushkin (2003) -- available on Blackboard

e) *Darkness in El Dorado* Packet (Required)

Turner-Sponsel email (8/31/00) re impending Scandal  
Patrick Tierney, "The Fierce Anthropologist" (*The New Yorker*)  
John Tooby, "Jungle Fever" ([www.slate.msn.com](http://www.slate.msn.com)) with replies by  
Patrick Tierney and the editors of *The New Yorker*  
Sharon Begley: "Into the Heart of Darkness" (*Newsweek* 11/27/00)  
"Update from the University of Michigan" [Kent V. Flannery, redactor]  
Kent V. Flannery, "Hypocrisy in El Dorado" (*Anthropology News*)  
Les Sponsel, "Response to Flannery and Other Partisans"

f) Supplemental Material (Optional available on Blackboard)

"Fighting the Darkness..." (*Scientific American* profile of Chagnon)  
Napoleon Chagnon, "The Academic Left and Threats to Scientific Anthro"  
Barry Bortnick, "Amazon Jungle to Ivory Tower"  
Kim Hill, Position Statement on *Darkness in El Dorado*  
Jane B. Lancaster, Position Statement on *Darkness in El Dorado*  
AAA El Dorado Task Force "Media Advisory" on their Final Report  
David Glenn, "Retreat at El Dorado" (*Chronicle of Higher Education*)

**EP on Mating and Rape:** Assignment for Thursday, March 5

- a) Palmer and Palmer, "Mating and Reproduction" (*Evolutionary Psychology* Ch 5)
- b) Robert Wright, "Our Cheating Hearts" (*Time* 8/15/94)
- c) Thornhill and Palmer, "Why Men Rape" (*The Sciences*, Jan/Feb 2000)
- d) Michael Ghiglieri, *The Dark Side of Man* (brief excerpts)

**Taking Back Darwin?:** Assignment for Thursday, March 26

David J. Buller, "Four Fallacies of Pop Evolutionary Psychology" (*Sci Am*)

David J. Buller, Adapting Minds (Chapter 1 and Chapter 5)

Natalie Angier, "Men, Women, Sex & Darwin" (NYT Magazine 2/21/99)

Barbara Smuts, "The Evolutionary Origins Of Patriarchy" (*Human Nature*)

Vickers and Kitcher, "Pop Sociobiology Reborn" (in *SGR*, Cheryl Brown, ed)

Strongly recommended: Packet re: Thornhill & Palmer, *A Natural History of Rape*

Coyne & Berry "Rape as an Adaptation" [Nature 3/9/00 Review of *ANOHR*]

Natalie Angier, "Biological Bull" [*Ms.* June/July 2000 Review of *ANOHR*]

Thornhill & Palmer, "What Our Book Really Says" (*Online Symposium*)

Additional *Recommended* Reading (See what catches your eye)

Delton, Robertson, Kendrick: "Reply to Buller's Critique" (CEP Online)

Jerry Coyne, "Of Vice and Men" [TNR, Review *ANOHR*]

Cosmides & Tooby, "Response to Coyne" (CEP Online)

Wrangham and Peterson, "Relationship Violence" from *Demonic Males*

Palmer and Thornhill, "A Posse of Good Citizens Brings Outlaw

Evolutionists to Justice. Response to *Evolution, Gender, Rape* (Cheryl Brown, ed. on reserve). [The T&P piece is on Blackboard].

**Male versus Female Brain?:** Assignment for Thursday, April 2

Simon Baron-Cohen, *The Essential Difference*

Distributed Packet: Controversy over Larry Summers's Remarks

Sam Dillon, "Harvard Chief Defends His Talk on Women" (*NYT* 1/18/05)

Goldin & Katz, "Summers is Right" (*Boston Globe*, 1/23/05)

Angier & Chang, "Gray Matter and the Sexes" (*Science Times* 1/24/05)

Begley, "Harvard Chief's Words Lack Basis in Science," (*WSJ* 1/28/05)

Pinker, "Sex Ed: The science of difference," (*The New Republic*, 2/14/05)

Healy & Rimer, "Furor Lingers..." (*The New York Times*, 2/18/05)

Cox and Alm, "Scientists Are Made Not Born" (NYT op ed, 2/18,05)

Laura Tyson, "What Larry Summers Got Right" (*Business Week*, 3/28/05)

Lawrence H. Summers, "Remarks at NBER Conference" (transcript)

Recommended Reading (available on Blackboard)

Ben Barres, "Does Gender Matter" *Nature* Commentary (7/13/06)

Sharon Begley, "He, Once a She, Offers Own View..." *WSJ* (3/13/06)

The Pinker vs. Spelke Debate (available on Blackboard but check out

[http://www.edge.org/3rd\\_culture/debate05/debate05\\_index.html](http://www.edge.org/3rd_culture/debate05/debate05_index.html))

**Darwin and the Gender Binary: Assignment for Thursday, April 9**

Required Reading:

- Chandler Burr, "The Discovery of Xq28" (from *A Separate Creation*)
- Hamer & Copeland, "Evolution" (from *The Science of Desire*)
- The Economist* (10/25/08) "The Evolution of Homosexuality"
- Sarah Blaffer Hrdy, Review of *Darwin's Rainbow* (*Nature* 5/6/04)
- Controversies in Science and Technology*, Vol. 2 Part 5 (Biology/Gender)
  - Patricia Gowaty, #20 "Power Dynamics in Science and Nature"
  - Joan Roughgarden: #21 "Social Selection vs. Sexual Selection"
  - Caitlyn Allen: #22 "It's a Boy: Gender Expectations Intrude..."
  - Alice Dreger: #23 "Beyond the Karyotype"
  - Christina Matta: #24 "Ambiguous Bodies & Deviant Sexualities"

Supplementary Reading (including some classics)

- Anne Fausto-Sterling, "The Five Sexes" (*The Sciences* March/April 1993)
- David Halperin, "'Homosexuality': A Cultural Construct"
- Richard Horton, "Is Homosexuality Inherited" (*NYRB* 7/13/95)
- Dean Hamer et al, on X chromosome markers and male sexual orientation
- Chandler Burr, Chapters 1-3 from *A Separate Creation*

**Toward a Darwinian Sociology: Assignment for Thursday, April 16:**

- Edward O. Wilson, Excerpt from *On Human Nature* (Chapter 7, Altruism)
- Pierre L. van den Berghe, *The Ethnic Phenomenon* (Preface; Chapters 1,2,7)
- Lopreato & Crippen, "The Clannish Brain" from *Crisis in Sociology*

**Race in Evolutionary Perspective: Assignment for Thursday, April 23**

Required Reading:

- Nicholas Wade, *Before the Dawn: Recovering the Lost History of Our Ancestors* [Chapters 1, 2 (30-34), 3 (47-50), 4, 5 (74-79; 95-99), 6 (118-122) 7 (134-138) **9** and **11**]. [all of Chapter 2 +12 recommended]
- Troy Duster, "The Reality of Race" (*Scientific American*, 2/2003)
- Troy Duster, "Race and Reification in Science" (*Science*, 2/18/05)
- Kruzan, Tooby & Cosmides, "Can Race be Erased?" CEP online
- J. Philippe Rushton, Excerpt from *Race, Evolution & Behavior*

**Race in Evolutionary Perspective (continued)**

Supplemental Reading:

Weiss and Buchanan, Review of *Before the Dawn* (*Nature* 6/13/06).  
Janet Lawley, Online Review of *Before the Dawn* (March 29, 2007).  
Steve Olson, "The Genetic Archaeology of Race" (*Atlantic Monthly* 4/2001)  
Barbara Katz Rothman, Excerpt from *Genetic Maps & Human Imaginations*

**Athleticism, Race, IQ and Ethnicity:** Assignment for Thursday, April 30

Assigned Reading:

John Entine, *Taboo* [Chapters 1-5; 19, 24]  
Malcolm Gladwell, "The Sports Taboo" (*The New Yorker* 3/19/97)  
Steven Pinker, "Groups and Genes" (*The New Republic* 6/26/06)  
Nature Commentary: Should scientists study race and IQ? (2/12/09)