



STS.009: Evolution and Society

An Introduction

STS.009: Evolution and Society

TODAY:

Please complete the sheets that are being circulated,
so we can complete registration quickly

BY NOON FRIDAY:

If you've registered but don't intend to take the
class, please email me

If you've not registered but do intend to take the
class, please register

STS.009: Evolution and Society

The Teaching Team:

Instructor: John Durant

Writing Advisor: Jeanne Wildman

Teaching Assistant: Michaela Thompson

STS.009: Evolution and Society

What is this course about?

- One of the biggest ideas in the whole of science
- An idea that people care passionately about
- An idea that people disagree passionately about

Evolution in biology

"Nothing in Biology Makes Sense Except in the Light of Evolution."

Theodosius Dobzhansky (1900-1975)

Evolution far beyond biology

"The tide of evolution carries everything before it, thoughts no less than bodies, and persons no less than nations"

George Santayana (1863-1952)

Evolution and society

"What is man? The point I want to make now is that all attempts to answer that question before 1859 are worthless and that we will be better off if we ignore them completely."

G. G. Simpson (1902-1984)

*If evolution's the answer,
what's the question?*



Whence the astonishing diversity of life on earth?

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Are you curious at all?

If you've ever wondered why life exists on earth, or why there are so many different kinds of living things, or why some plants have colorful flowers and others don't, or why some animals are solitary and others aren't, or how the peacock got his tail, or why humans are so (relatively) smart, or why so many people suffer from back-ache, or why...

Are you curious at all?

Basically, if you've ever been tempted to wonder about life at all...then you should wonder about evolution

What does this course offer?

Multiple journeys of discovery

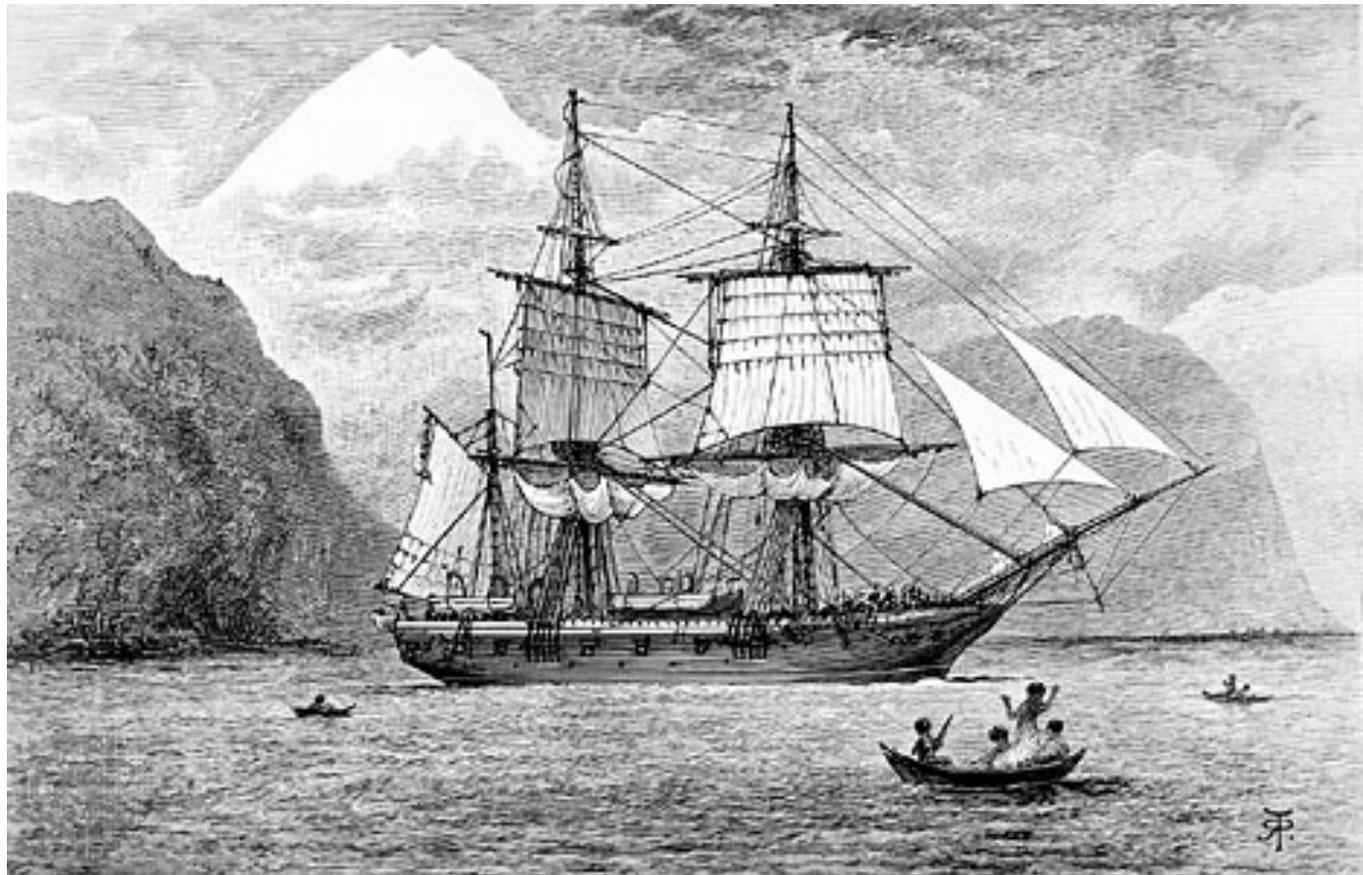
Journey #1

Into the history of evolutionary theory

Discover how, way before Darwin and Wallace got on the scene, geologists discovered "deep time"

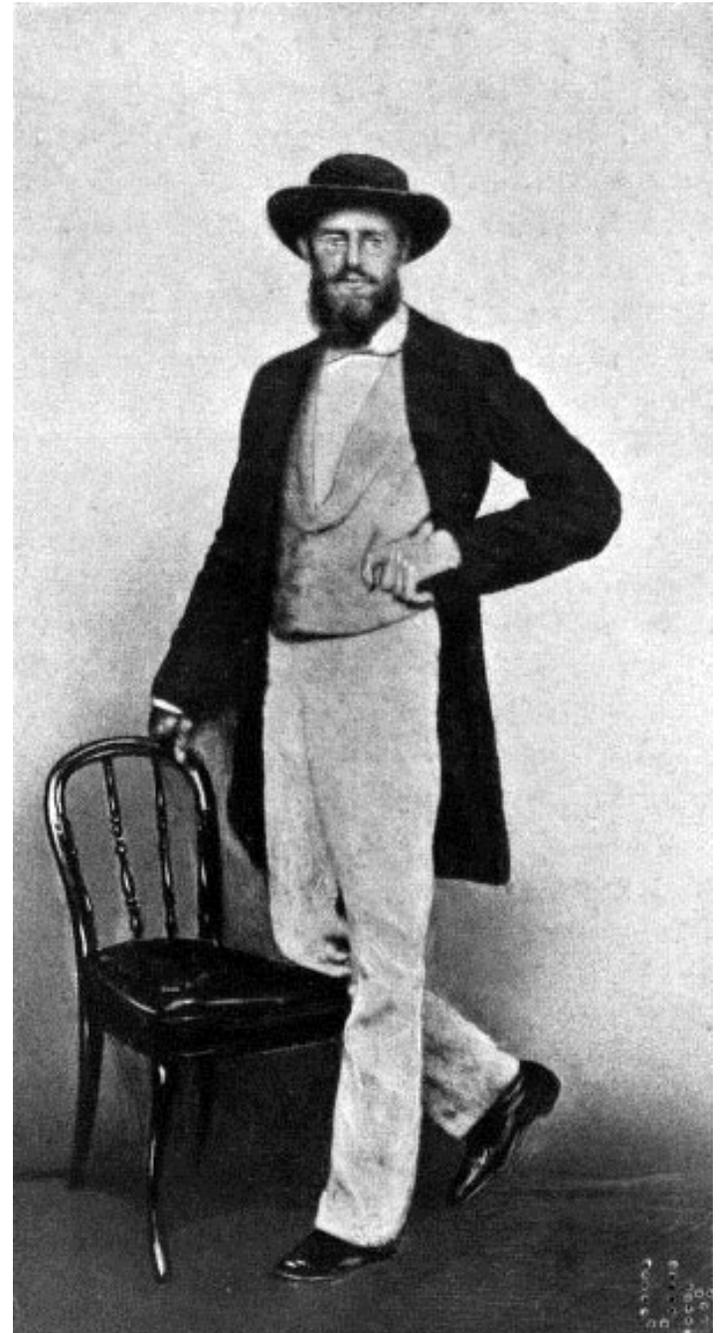


Journey with Charles Darwin aboard H.M.S. Beagle, and discover how his observations gradually led him to revolutionary ideas about evolution



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*Journey with Alfred
Russel Wallace through
the Malay Archipelago,
and find out how - quite
independently - he
discovered almost exactly
the same ideas as Darwin!*

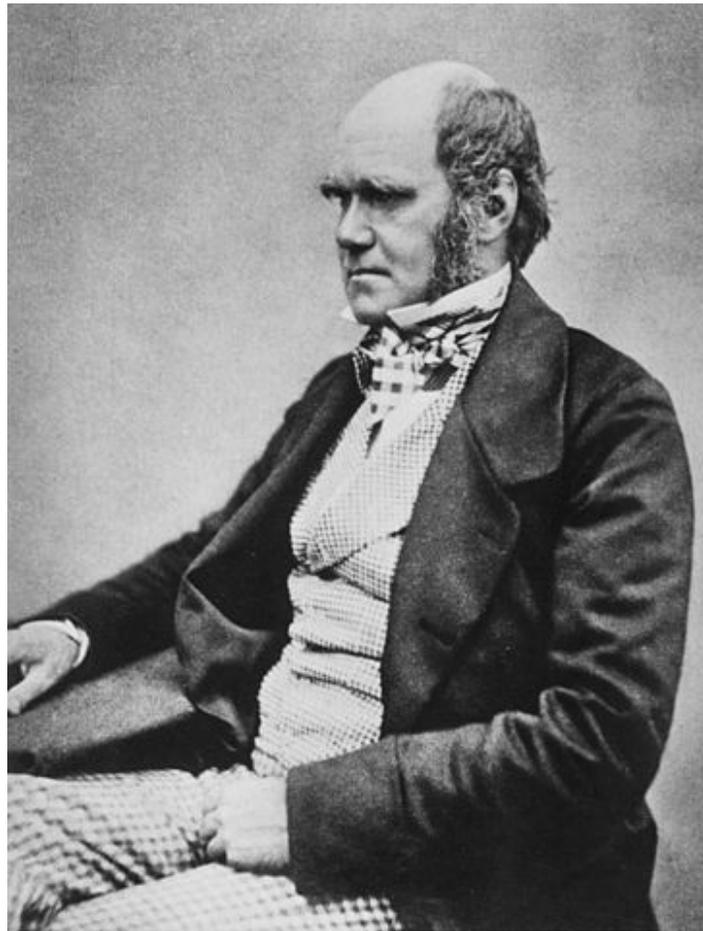


Alfred Russel Wallace

Journeys #2

*Into the fierce debates around
evolutionary theory*

Journey back to the publication of the Origin of Species (1859), and discover the key arguments ranged for and against Darwin



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*Discover the roots of American
"fundamentalism" in popular opposition to
evolution after the World War I*

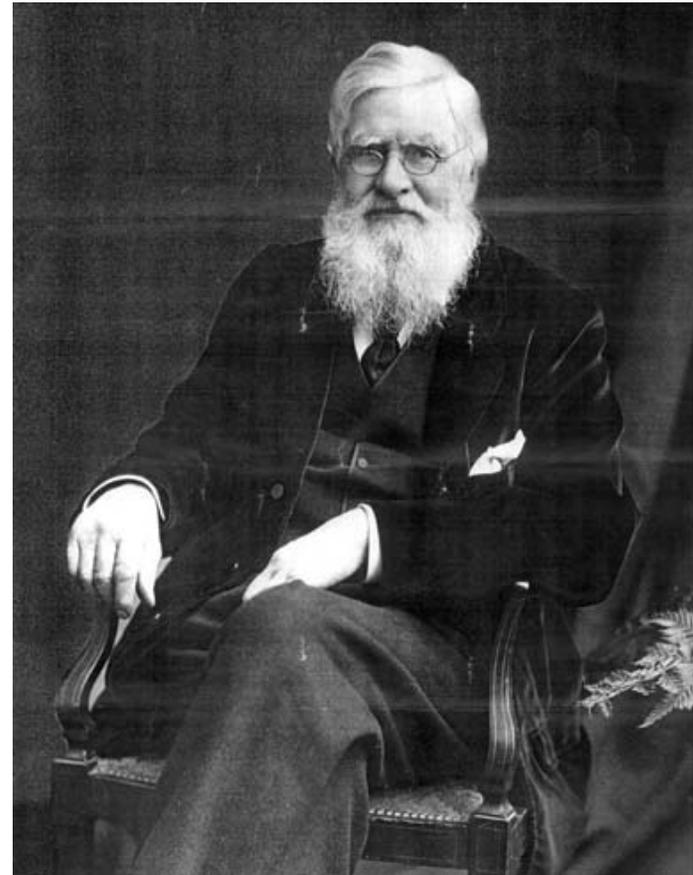
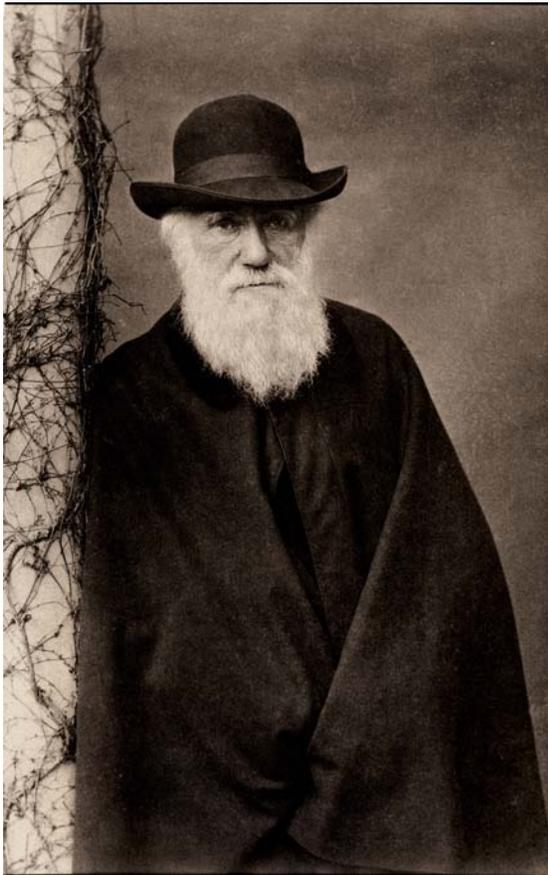


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Journey #3

Into multiple, contested attempts to apply evolution to an understanding of human behavior and human society

Discover how deeply Darwin and Wallace disagreed about the way their theory should be applied to humankind!



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Discover how an eccentric Austrian biologist's work on "imprinting" in geese helped create a new post-war evolutionary science of animal - and human - behavior



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Discover how far Darwinians have gone in their attempts to explain human behavior today

Journey #4

*Into some enduring issues at the interface
of evolution and society*

Can we really be
scientific about the
unrecoverable past?

What is the
relationship between
evolution and
religious belief?

How could evolution
have produced a
species quite so odd as
Homo sapiens?

Evolution & Society

What does evolution
have to say about
the origins of mind?

What light can
evolution shed on
patterns of social
cooperation and
conflict?

Can evolution
really explain the
origins of altruism
and morality?

Journey #5

Into your own opinions and attitudes:

What do you think are the larger implications of the theory of evolution by natural selection?

How will the course work?

- Weekly structure
 - Readings
 - Lectures
 - Sections
- Assignments
 - Papers
 - Debates
- Stellar Site

Assignments

- There are no exams
- 4 written papers, one of which will be revised in light of comments received
- Participation in 2 student debates, in weekly sections; notes for second debate also submitted as 5th assessed piece of work

CI-H Component

- The course aims to cultivate communication skills
- The Writing Advisor is there to help – make use of her!
- You must meet 1:1 with the Writing Advisor at least twice during the semester

Sections

- Weekly sections are an essential part of the course
- You must inform your Section Leader in advance if you intend to miss a section
- 2 or more unexplained absences from sections will affect course grade

Grading

- 20% Attendance and participation in sections
- 50% 4 written papers
- 30% Final “debate” presentation + submitted notes

Puzzle for Monday: What do all these subjects have in common?

*Archeology...Biological Anthropology,
Cosmology...Evolutionary biology...Forensic
science...Paleontology...Philology...?*

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