

Blockseminar B.A. and M.A. American Studies / Lehramt Englisch

Prof. Leonard Cassuto
American Literary Darwinism

American Literary Darwinism is a course organized around a scientific idea. Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* is a landmark book detailing a big idea, one of the biggest in the history of the West. His *Descent of Man* elaborates upon that idea. We'll be reading about Darwin's theory of evolution and some of the fiction and poetry that has been influenced directly and indirectly by it. We'll consider how Darwin shaped the ways that writers looked at big questions of fate and determinism--and also everyday realms like business. The object of the course is to consider the impact of a scientific idea across disciplines, an impact that continues to reverberate today. Authors will include Darwin, Jack London, Edith Wharton, and Robert Frost.

The class is part of the curricula B.A. American Studies, M.A. American Studies, and Lehramt Englisch. Please see LSF listing for module eligibility.

The class will meet on June 1, 8, 9, 15, 16, 22, and 29. We will meet from 10:00 to 12:45 on all dates except June 15. On that day we will meet from 12:00 to 14:45. Please see LSF listing for room numbers. There will be readings for each session and 2 additional film screenings (specifics tba).

Please obtain the following books:

Charles Darwin, *Origin of Species* (please **be sure to obtain the first edition, dated 1859**. Darwin revised the book five times, and other editions are also available. But we will work from the original version, which is available from Penguin and other publishers.)

Edith Wharton, *The Custom of the Country* (Penguin edition preferred)

Jack London, *Northland Stories* (Penguin; ed, Jonathan Auerbach)

Stephen Crane, *The Open Boat and Other Stories* (Dover Thrift edition). If you have trouble locating this edition, note that we will be reading the novella *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* and the short story "The Open Boat."

Please also obtain a course reader at Skript and Kopie (will be available on the first day of the class).

For preparation for our first meeting, please read Darwin's *Origin of Species*, chapters 1-4.

To register, please email Prof. Leonard Cassuto at cassuto@fordham.edu by May 25th.