

# UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

University of Denver  
Enrichment Program  
Spring 2006

## A Troubled House: God and Darwin in American Life

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<b>Phone</b>	Robbins 303. 871-2751 Saitta 303.871.2680	<b>Course Times</b>	Thursdays May 4, 11, 18, and 25 6:30-9:00 pm
<b>Location</b>	Sturm Hall 154	<b>Office</b>	Robbins Sturm Hall 170 Saitta Sturm Hall 105

### Course Description:

The reference in our course title is to Proverbs 11:29, “He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind”. This passage, of course, gave rise to the title of the famous 1955 play *Inherit the Wind* and its multiple descendants, including the famous 1960 film starring Spencer Tracy and Fredric March, a 1965 television movie, a 1996 Broadway revival, and a 1999 TV remake. Each production used a fictionalized account of the 1925 Scopes “Monkey Trial” pitting biblical creationism against scientific evolutionism to comment on then-current culture wars in American life.

Today, 80 years after Scopes, God and Darwin are at it again. The American house is deeply divided over the proposed teaching of “intelligent design” in public school science class, the morality of stem cell research, the wisdom of a constitutional separation of church and state, and other issues. These debates harbor serious consequences for American life; our ability settle (peacefully?) them depends not only on how we understand evolution and creation, but also how we understand science and religion.

This course will use contemporary “evolution wars” as an entry point for exploring the limits of, and relationship between, science and religion in American life. We’ll learn a bit about what Darwin really said, and clarify the nature and implications of evolutionary theory as an approach to understanding the world. We’ll explore the character and purposes of religious beliefs and commitments, including organized religion’s attitudes toward evolutionary science. We’ll view and critically analyze the 1960 version of *Inherit the Wind*. We’ll consider the public policy issues that currently pit evolutionary and religious understanding against each other. Finally, we’ll explore ideas for creating a more respectful and appreciative relationship, if not a lasting peace.

**Goals or take away(s):** A better understanding of the nature of, and tension between, evolution and creationism in American life, and why such an understanding matters.

## Course Schedule

Week	Topic	Required Reading
1	Introductions; Public Lecture by Michael Ruse: <i>The Creation-Evolution Struggle: An American Story</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>
2	(Mis)Understanding Darwin; The Origins and Nature of American Fundamentalism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adler, “Charles Darwin: Evolution of a Scientist”;</li> <li>• Johnson, “Is Darwinism Atheistic”?</li> <li>• MacKenzie, “End of the Enlightenment”</li> <li>• Holderness, “Enemy at the Gates”</li> </ul>
3	The Scopes Trial and its Aftermath; Film: <i>Inherit the Wind</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Numbers, “The Scopes Trial: History and Legend”</li> <li>• Gould, “William Jennings Bryan’s Last Campaign”</li> </ul>
4	God and Darwin in Contemporary American Life; What would a Fruitful Dialogue between Science and Religion look like?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TBA</li> </ul>