This course will explore the origins and reasons for abuse, misuse and misunderstanding of Darwinian thought among intellectuals, academicians, and common people alike. This course will introduce modern Darwinian thinking and will guide students through its common pitfalls and fallacious reasoning to help them acquire a nuanced understanding of what is probably one of the greatest ideas generated by mankind. **There are no prerequisites for this course.**

For more information contact Rajesh (venkatr@pdx.edu) or visit our old site [http://www.pdx.edu/sysc/courses-fall-2012](http://www.pdx.edu/sysc/courses-fall-2012)
Darwinian Thought in Society (SYSC 399U)

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*Darwinian Thought in Society* is an interdisciplinary course. It explores the question of how (or if) the theory of natural selection is useful in understanding human society. The course introduces students to a history of biological thought before Darwin and how its foundations were changed with Darwin’s theory of evolution by natural selection. The course sketches the modern structure of evolutionary theory and traces attempts to apply the theory to human beings and societies. Such attempts at the naturalization of Social Sciences and Humanities have been attacked by both philosophers and academics in those traditional disciplines. The course concludes by introducing the often continuous debate that exists within academic and philosophical circles on the validity of these attempts.

**Prerequisites**: None

**Basic Course Structure**

The sessions are part discussion and part interactive lecture. The students are assigned readings that will be discussed at the beginning of class. The instructor lectures for the remainder of the class. The instructor’s lecture will sometimes augment the discussion and sometimes be independent of the discussion. The students will be asked to write short summaries of the discussions and the lectures. The course has two online exams and a final paper with oral presentation. Following is a brief outline of topics covered

- Nature-Nurture debate
- Pre and post Darwinian biological thought
- The current status of evolutionary theory
- Evolutionary psychology
- Biology as reverse engineering
- Darwin’s theory of natural selection as a design principle, including design tools based on artificial selection