Wake Forest School of Divinity  
Salvation and Evolution: The Scopes Trial, 1925 and Beyond  
Bill J. Leonard, Professor  
One Credit

“With from one to three millions of distinct species in the animal and vegetable world, not a single species has been traced to another. . . . Why should we assume without proof that man is a blood relative of any lower form of life?” William Jennings Bryan

“If today you can take a thing like evolution and make it a crime to teach it in the public schools, tomorrow you can make it a crime to teach it in the private schools, and next year you can make it a crime to teach it to the hustings or in the church. At the next session you may ban books and the newspapers... Ignorance and fanaticism are ever busy and need feeding.” Clarence Darrow

“No matter what the issue of that great moral cause, it seems to me very unlikely that either of the principal parties will be greatly shaken. The Evolutionists will go on demonstrating, believing in and teaching the mutability of living forms, and the Ku Klux theologians will continue to whoop for Genesis undefiled.” H. L. Mencken

But what have the High Schools of the land to do with the child spending eternity in hell? Many books being taught in the High Schools teach Evolution that all species or kinds of beings, from the smallest insects up to man, have developed, evolved, from the lower species up to the higher. . . . If this is true, then Jesus Christ was the bastard, illegitimate son of a fallen woman, not Deity, not really God's son, not really our Redeemer and Saviour at all. T. T. Martin (Hell and High School)

Purpose of the Course: This one-credit course explores the history of the famous Scopes “Monkey” Trial as it occurred in Dayton, Tennessee, in the summer of 1925. The trial took place after the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) convinced Dayton public school teacher, John Scopes, to intentionally violate the Tennessee anti-evolution law in order to provoke a legal confrontation. When Tennessee v. Scopes came to trial, the ACLU secured the services of nationally-known attorney and public agnostic, Clarence Darrow, to defend the teacher. Supporters of the law enlisted William Jennings Bryan, populist Democratic presidential candidate, conservative Presbyterian, and master orator, as part of the state’s legal team. The trial highlighted debates over the nature of science and religion, public education, fundamentalism and liberalism, and populist politics in early 20th century America.

Ninety years later, Tennessee v. Scopes remains a much mythologized case study in the early stages of controversies that continue to rage over Darwinism, Creationism, Secularism, Evangelicalism, Politics, and Protestant privilege in 21st century America. This course explores those issues with particular concern for the science/religion debates then and now.
Learning Goals for the Course:
Through this course and its related research, students will:

- Develop knowledge of events and issues surrounding the famous Scopes Trial of 1925.
- Discern specific ways in which concepts of and debates about science and religion became a part of those historic events.
- Reflect on the continuing implications of science/religion issues articulated in 1925 relate to 21st century “culture wars,” particularly regarding Darwinism, Creationism and Education in the Church and Society in the U.S.
- Formulate a strategy for approaching questions of science and religion in a particular theological or ecclesiastical context.

Texts:

Class Procedures:

1. As part of their preparation for the course students will read:
   - Introduction to Jeffrey P. Moran, *A Brief History with Documents*, 2002;
   - At the time of the class, each student will submit a one-page, single-spaced summary for EACH of the three readings and at least three questions raised by the readings. THESE THREE RESPONSES ARE DUE ON SAKAI BY FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 11 WHEN THE CLASS CONVENES.

2. Utilizing the two texts and at least three additional sources from the bibliography, students will write a 10-12 (2500-3000 word) double-spaced page paper using the Scopes Trial as a case study for interpreting current debates regarding the continuing theological and ecclesiastical implications of “Darwinian Evolution” and “Scientific Creation” in the American public square. THIS PAPER MUST BE POSTED ON SAKAI “ASSIGNMENTS” PAGE NO LATER THAN 5:00 PM, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2015

Topics for the Class:

- Darwin, Evolution and Theology: The Context of the Scopes Trial
- The Scopes Trial: Personalities and Powers
- The Scopes Trial: Populist Confrontation
- The Scopes Trial and the Preachers: T. T. Martin’s *Hell and the High School
• The Scopes Trial: Politics in church and society
• The Scopes Trial as mythic moment in American culture
• "Inherit the Wind:" Hollywood Re-mythologizes History
• Biology, Theology and Hermeneutics: The Scopes Trial as Case Study in science and religion
• Creation Science, Public Schools and Culture Wars: The Scopes Legacy

Bibliography:


