

**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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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:

1. Edward J. Larson, *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate over Science and Religion*, (2006).
2. Jeffrey P. Moran, *The Scopes Trial: A Brief History of Documents*, (2002).

## Class Procedures:

1. As part of their preparation for the course students will read:
  - **At least sections 1-2** (to page 191) of the text: Edward J. Larson, *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate over Science and Religion*, 2006;
  - **Introduction to** Jeffrey P. Moran, *A Brief History with Documents*, 2002;
  - L. Maren Wood, “The Monkey Trial Myth: Popular Culture Representations of the Scopes Trial,” *Canadian Review of American Studies*, 2002, vol. 32 Issue 2, p 147-164.
  - 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:**

Collins, Kenneth J. *Power, Politics and the Fragmentation of Evangelicalism: From the Scopes Trial to the Obama Administration*. InterVarsity Press, 2012.

Hostetler, Michael. “William Jennings Bryan as Demosthenes: The Scopes Trial and the Undelivered Oration on Evolution,” *Western Journal of Community* vol. 62, Issue 2 (June, 1998).

Larson, Edward. “The Scopes Trial and the Evolving Concept of Freedom,” *Virginia Law Review*, Vol. 85, No. 3 (April 1999), pp. 503-529.

Larson, Edward. *Trial and Error: The American Controversy Over Creation and Evolution*. Oxford University Press, 2003.

Lienesch, Michael. *In the Beginning: Fundamentalism, the Scopes Trial and the Making of the Anti-Evolution Movement*. University of North Carolina Press, 2007.

Masci, David. “Should Schools be Allowed to Teach Creationism?,” *CQ Researcher*, Vol. 7, Issue 32 (August 22, 1997).

Mencken, H. L. *A Religious Orgy in Tennessee*. Hoboken, NJ: Melville House Publishing, 2006.

Moore, Randy. “Creationism in the U. S., The Aftermath of the Scopes Trial,” *American Biology Teacher*, Vol. 60, Issue 8 (October 1998).

Moran, Jeffrey P. “Reading Race into the Scopes Trial: African American Elites, Science, and Fundamentalism,” *The Journal of American History*. Vol. 90, No. 3 (December 2003), pp. 891-911.

Moran, Jeffrey P. *The Scopes Trial: a Brief History of Documents*. New York: Bedford/St. Martins, 2002.

Russell, C. Allyn, “William Jennings Bryan: Statesman-Fundamentalist,” *Journal of Presbyterian History*, (Summer 1975), pp. 93-119. See also Russell, C. Allyn, *Voices of American Fundamentalism*. Westminster Press, 1976.

Shapiro, Adam. *Trying Biology: The Scopes Trial, Textbooks and the Antievolution Movement in American Schools*. University of Chicago Press, 2013.

Wood, L. Maren, "The Monkey Trial Myth: Popular Culture Representations of the Scopes Trial," *Canadian Review of American Studies*, 2002, vol. 32 Issue 2, p 147-164.