



### ***“To Naturally Suffer Most”: Darwin and the Victorians***

In *The Origin of the Species*, Darwin tells us that “the forms which stand in closest competition with those undergoing modification and improvement will naturally suffer most.” This course explores both those undergoing such modification and those who, by contrast, are suffering most in the Victorian era. We will read excerpts from *The Origin of the Species*, of course, and also Gillian Beer’s seminal work, *Darwinian Plots*, to provide us with theoretical frameworks for both the science afoot and the literary responses to that science.

Literary texts will include Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Kingsley’s *The Water Babies*, Haggard’s *She*, Shreiner’s *Story of an African Farm*, poetry from Matthew Arnold and Tennyson’s epic grieving poem *In Memoriam*, non-fiction from African traveler Mary Kingsley, and two neo-Victorian works: A. S. Byatt’s *Angels and Insects* and John Fowles’s *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*.

Students will present a historical brief on a related topic from a given list, which will then spawn a discussion question for one work. Graduate students will summarize and respond to one critical article of their choosing. Undergraduates will write a final paper of 12-15 pages, while graduates will write a final paper of 15-20 pages in length; both sectors will present on that paper’s research in tandem with another student, in order to explore how two or more authors treated a shared topic. There will be one take-home midterm, but ultimately, this course will be graded by natural selection. There will be an opportunity every class period to vote on whose insights and comments were the strongest, and we will figure out a justifiable reward.