

# Group Presentations and Discussion

## Thursday, February 24

### Description

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On February 24, we will be covering Chapters 11 and 12 of the *Origin* (Chapters 12 and 13 in the sixth edition), where Darwin presents his ideas concerning geographical distribution and evolution by natural selection. Our discussion of this material will be guided by group presentations, divided into the following six topics:

- Group 1: Multiple Centers of Creation (3)
- Group 2: Case Study: Africa and South America (3)
- Group 3: Means of Dispersal (3)
- Group 4: Alpine Species (Dispersal during the Glacial Period) (4)
- Group 5: Oceanic Islands and Nearest Continents (4)
- Group 6: Freshwater productions (4)

### Content of Presentations

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#### Explain Darwin's thoughts on the topic<sup>1</sup>

This includes giving specific examples of what Darwin says about the topic. It also includes critical evaluation of Darwin's ideas about the topic. The group is responsible for identifying possible inconsistencies, puzzles, or problems in what Darwin says about their topic.

#### Explain how this topic is relevant to the Darwinian project

Why is Darwin talking about this? How does it add to his theory or to the evidence for his theory?

#### Formulate questions for discussion that are relevant to the topic/facilitate discussion

No more than 10 minutes of your 15 minutes should be you lecturing to the group. It is important for your group to present the material and identify questions in such a way so as to facilitate class discussion. (\*Note: Since all groups will be evaluated on this aspect of their presentation, it is important that when you are *not* presenting, you actively engage with the material. This includes asking questions and offering ideas in response to questions asked by the presenters.)

#### Do background research

Your presentation should not simply outline what Darwin says. We will have all done the reading and have some idea of this. To make your presentation interesting, you need to do some background research to add detail and color to the points that Darwin is trying to make.

Examples:

- Suppose your topic is the distribution of species in Africa and South America, you could research some differences in the flora and fauna of these two regions, perhaps providing pictures to illustrate Darwin's claims.

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<sup>1</sup> This feature is most relevant to Groups 2-6. Darwin doesn't say much about Multiple Centers of Creation in the *Origin*—rather, he assumes that readers will already be familiar with the view. Group 1, then, should focus on presenting this view. A key paper on this topic is Louis Agassiz's "Geographical Distribution of Animals" (1850).

- Suppose your topic is alpine species. You could do some research about how Darwin's ideas about the Ice Age compare with modern ideas. You could provide examples of Darwin's claims that alpine species are very similar all across the globe.

## **Guidelines and Grading**

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1. Each presentation will be limited to 15 minutes. At least 5 minutes of this must be devoted to discussion (described above).
2. Each member of the group must participate in presenting the material in class (this means that each member must speak at some point).
3. Groups are required to distribute work evenly amongst the members. To document this, each person must submit a typed document listing what that person did on the presentation. Not every member of a group is guaranteed to receive the same grade.
4. Groups are encouraged, though not required, to use visual aids/handouts/etc. If you would like to use some sort of computer presentation, you need to discuss this with me ahead of time so that we can get your presentation loaded on the computer *before* the class period. (This will prevent us from running into technical difficulties mid-class).
5. Groups will be graded on a scale of 1-4 on each of the four items mentioned in the section above ("Content of Presentation"). The scores are assigned as follows:
  - 4 – this aspect of the presentation was done exceptionally well. I was blown away.
  - 3 – this aspect of the presentation was good.
  - 2 – this aspect of the presentation was below average.
  - 1 – this aspect of the presentation was very poor or missing.

Overall presentation scores will then be assigned as follows:

- 16 = A+
- 15 = A
- 14 = A-
- 13 = B+
- 12 = B
- 11 = B-
- 10 = C+
- 9 = C
- 8 = C-
- 7 = D+
- 6 = D
- 5 = F
- 4 = F

Note, that in accordance with point 3, individual group members grade could deviate somewhat from the overall group grade.