In Humanities 1302 (Honors) you are required to write a research paper. Through careful analysis, evaluation, and interpretation, you are arguing for a critical interpretation of primary and secondary sources (in this case, the writings of Charles Darwin, or work about him) in the life, ideas, or career, of Charles Darwin. You have multiple options (see below), so choose that which most appeals to your interests.

The central focus and plan of your essay should be clear in the thesis sentence, which generally speaking should appear as the last sentence in your introductory paragraph. The thesis statement must be your own assertion about the primary text (s) related to the assignment. Although you are not writing a report about what other critics think about the text (s) you have chosen, you are taking such work into consideration in your paper.

The body paragraphs of your essay should take the form of a standard argument, containing an assertion as the topic sentence and support, which will include relevant material from the primary and secondary sources. (The primary sources are the work, or works of Darwin you choose to analyze; secondary sources are scholarly sources written about the primary source.) Remember, you are analyzing, evaluating, and interpreting the primary (and secondary) source (s), not simply retelling a story others have already told. You are trying, in other words, to solve a historical problem related to Charles Darwin. Use transitional phrases in your second and subsequent developmental paragraph topic sentences to move smoothly from one idea to the next and establish logical connections between ideas. Make sure that the topic sentence matches the elements of your thesis. Use transitions within paragraphs as you compound evidence. Remember that every quotation must be introduced and explained within the context of your argument.

You must finish your essay with a conclusion (something that might be more than a single paragraph), which is not merely a restatement of the thesis statement. Please be aware that for written work to be considered acceptable at this level, it should be thoughtful, clear, and carefully crafted. Furthermore, it must be free of glaring mechanical errors that distract and confuse.

Remember that we are using Aristotle’s definition of “opinion” in this class: “a reasoned conclusion based on facts and evidence.” Unless your opinion can be supported by textual evidence, do not include it in your paper.

Your paper must meet the following minimum criteria:

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1 Copied and revised from my colleague Dr. Amelia Keel, Lone Star College – Kingwood.
To avoid a failing grade, you must meet the minimum length requirement of eight correctly-formatted full pages and the maximum length of ten pages.

You must consult several primary sources for your paper (e.g. works/letters of Darwin, works from Darwin’s contemporaries, historical newspapers available online through the library), plus at least five peer-reviewed scholarly secondary sources, and you must include quotes from them, along with the primary source(s), throughout. You must include footnote citations when quoting from primary and secondary texts, using Chicago Manual of Style formatting guidelines. On using the Chicago Manual of Style see below: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

Attach a Chicago Style formatted Bibliography page that includes both primary and secondary sources. (Look at the documents about Chicago formatting to make sure your documents and citations are in the correct form.)

You must write in the third person (no “I” or “you”).

All papers must be double-spaced from top to bottom and include the appropriate heading and headers. Use a one-inch margin all around, Times New Roman 12 pt. font. You must have an original title. Consult with Dr. Barr for how to title your paper.

Your paper must be thoroughly proofread and edited; use college-level, standard English. Remember that you are in a relationship with a reader. I will stop reading your paper at the end of the first paragraph and give you a zero if you do not submit work that meets the basic standards of college-level work.

How do I choose my topic?

1. Watch the video “Darwin’s Dangerous Idea,” either in D2L or in the library. Afterward, think hard about what interests you and talk with Dr. Barr about what potential research paper topics. Researching and writing (and presenting) a paper will be much easier if you are fascinated by the topic.

2. Again, talk with Dr. Barr about what interests you. He will help point you in the right direction about potentially good topics.

3. Keep your topic narrowly focused. You cannot write a paper on “Darwin and Religion”; such a topic would simply be too broad. But, you can write, for example, a paper on an incident, or week, in Darwin’s life, centered on an interest of your choosing that at the same time solves an important historical problem.

4. Scrutinize the indexes in your texts for the course. They should be helpful in getting you to think about your paper.
5. Once you have done these things, talk with Dr. Barr and think about how to formulate
the question you are trying to answer, or historical problem you are trying to solve, in
your paper.

➢ Important points to remember:

1. Your peer-reviewed, scholarly sources must come from reputable academic journals
accessed through the library databases or reprinted in scholarly collections and/or from
scholarly, book-length studies found in a college or university library. If using online
scholarly material, it is best to access more than one database. The best databases for
literary study are JSTOR Arts and Sciences, Project Muse, and Literature Resource
Center, but you may use Academic Search Complete and historical databases such as
History Study Center and World History Collection to find background material on the
historical milieu. Use the advanced search in databases, and be sure to check the boxes for
peer-reviewed sources and articles only. This will help you eliminate unacceptable sources,
including book reviews. If you need more help, a quick meeting with a librarian will clarify
the search procedures.

2. Remember that citations must be alphabetized by authors’ last names from top to bottom on
the Bibliography page. Your entries must be consistently double-spaced through the
document and have a hanging indent. See the sample Bibliography page for a visual
representation.

3. What does not count as a secondary source?
   a. Introductory material from the Darwin: Norton Critical, though you should definitely read
      it!
   b. General dictionaries and encyclopedias, including dictionary.com, Encarta.com, and
      Wikipedia.com.
   c. Summary sources such as Cliff’s Notes, Spark Notes, and enotes.
   d. Online lecture materials for this class or materials posted by professors at other
      institutions.
   e. Reviews.
   f. Article abstracts and summaries.

You must submit your paper on the due date via email and in hard copy format in class.
Save your paper with your last name as the first word in the file name (for example: Wilson
Research Paper. Students who do not submit papers in the correct format will receive a grade of zero.

How to fail this assignment:

1. Do not address the assignment as I have laid it out here.
2. Do not submit 8-10 complete, correctly formatted pages of text.
3. Plagiarize. (All papers will be scanned by Turnitin.com)
4. Do not include several primary sources or the five required peer-reviewed scholarly sources.
5. Submit a paper that is so poorly argued, proofread, or edited that it is nonsensical.