



The University of Chicago
Department of Statistics
Seminar Series

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Darwin, Galton, and the Statistical Enlightenment

MONDAY, October 5, 2009, at 4:00 PM
133 Eckhart Hall, 5734 S. University Avenue
Refreshments following the seminar in Eckhart 110.

ABSTRACT

In Aberdeen Scotland on the morning of 10 September 1885, the 63-year-old scientist Francis Galton gave a plenary address at a major conference in which he announced the results of 25 years of investigation. That announcement marked the beginning of dramatic and far-reaching changes in statistical conceptual approaches over the half-century that followed, changes that so permeate all subsequent work as to allow us to refer to 1885–1935 as an era of statistical enlightenment. The works of that era are reasonably well known, but the story of how that 1885 work grew from an attempt to solve a puzzle implicitly posed in Darwin's *Origin of Species* is not; for all the attention the final stage has received there are crucial parts of the story that have escaped historical attention. That puzzle and the paradoxical circumstances surrounding its resolution, including an unusual Chicago connection, are the focus of the talk.

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