

AFR 317/JUS 317: Genes, Race, and Society

Fall 2022 | Session A

8/18/2022 – 10/07/2022

Prof. Kierra Otis (she/they)
Online

Class meeting time:

Email: kjotis@asu.edu
Zoom

Office hours: By appointment via

Course Content and Goals

An in-depth examination of the biological and social construction of race in western societies. Special emphasis is placed on examining these constructs from a historical perspective, and the biomedical and social implications of genetics and genomics.

We shall ask such questions as: How have biologists and other life scientists theorized and explained human difference along axes of race? How have concepts of 'genes,' genetics, and more recently genomics created or continued conversations and theorizations about evolution, fueled eugenicist movements, and supported specious theories about racial difference?

This course fulfills University General Studies SB, C and H, and CLAS Science and Society requirements.

Learning Outcomes:

- Understand the socio-cultural context and historical development of the idea of race
- Assess how definitions of race, science, and genetics have informed our understanding of identity and group difference
- Consider the implications of developments in the life sciences for politics, social identity, and cultural belonging
- Evaluate the ways in which cultural beliefs about race have influenced scientific research and the development of knowledge, and the efforts by individuals and social movements to challenge scientific institutions to assert new claims about identity, difference, and inequality.

Course Textbook and Materials

- Skloot, Rebecca. *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*. NY: Crown, 2011. (available through ASU Library as an ebook)
- Krismaky, Sheldon and Kathleen Sloan, eds. *Race and the Genetic Revolution: Science, Myth, and Culture*. NY: Columbia University Press, 2011. (available through ASU Library as ebook)
- Articles and other materials are available on Canvas or through ASU Library Reading List.

Format and Ground Rules:

Note that since this class fulfills a requirement for students pursuing a BS degree, there is the potential for considerable “culture clash” between those of you who intend to become scientists, and those of you in the humanities or other fields. The mix of interests can work well, provided that: 1) we all do the readings; 2) we all participate in class; 3) we are all courteous and respectful to one another, even in cases of disagreement; and 4) we ask for clarification if the discussion seems to be moving in a confusing direction.

I have expectations about the level of work that you will do over the course of the semester. You will need to be critically engaged with the material; you must use a critical eye. Please keep an open mind both to the readings and to the views of your classmates with whom you might have differences. Also, please remember that in a university classroom, you must be able to differentiate between emotions and personal opinions on the one hand, and reasoned analysis of the course material on the other.

As an online 7 ½ week class, this course is designed to cover the material of a 16-week course in half the time. Therefore, you should expect to spend twice the amount of time that you would spend on a 16-week class.

Academic Honesty:

Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated—this includes submitting the same paper for more than one class. You are expected to conduct yourself ethically during all activities associated with this class. Any attempt to represent the work of someone else as one’s own or any other form of academic dishonesty will result in a grade of E (0 points) on the assignment. Please review the university’s position on academic integrity: <http://provost.asu.edu/academicintegrity>

Course Grading & Assignments

Total points for the semester: 200

Quizzes: 4 quizzes at 20 points each, 80 points. Quizzes will cover material from the lecture and readings. These form the core of your grade for the class, so be sure to

study for them. They will be mostly objective answer questions, with a few short answer/essay questions on occasion.

Discussion Boards: 4 DB at 15 points each, 60 points. Please follow the detailed instructions on Canvas regarding discussion board posts.

Analysis Paper: 60 points. You will write a 5-7pp paper researching one of the suggested topics. You may also ask about a different topic relating to the course material.

Criteria for Grading:

A: Outstanding. Written work is careful and nuanced, conforms to standard *written* English, and displays consistency of usage and style. Student demonstrates near total familiarity with the readings. Student shows wide-ranging ability to make connections across readings and understand subtlety of argument. In addition, in classroom discussions they participate enthusiastically and with due attention to the readings.

B: Very good. Written work is clearly above average, with consistency of style and usage and only minor flaws. Participation is pertinent and thoughtful. The student demonstrates an ability to make linkages across disciplines and kinds of experience and has clearly read all or nearly all of the assigned material.

C: Average. Directions followed. Student met minimal expectations but missed several projects and did not always appear to keep up with the readings. Written work has many flaws. Student shows reasonable grasp of most concepts and demonstrates some ability to integrate experiences inside and outside of the classroom. There is at least some class participation.

D: Below expectations. Below what one would normally expect from a college student. Writing has major problems that impede understanding. Student fails to participate appropriately in the classroom, fails to turn in work, has excessive absences.

E: Well below expectations. Written work consistently falls below the college level, directions are ignored or misunderstood, help is not sought, absences and missed assignments are frequent, participation is inappropriate or nonexistent. Shows little or no grasp of concepts, and is unable to relate material from inside and outside of the classroom.

Feedback: There are 80 of you between all the sections. As much as I would like to give substantial feedback on your written work, this is very difficult for me to do. You'll notice that if you received full points, you will not have comments from me. If you have points deducted from your assignment, I will be sure to explain why. It's usually because you didn't follow the instructions closely enough.

Late Work: I accept late work up until September 30th. I do not deduct points for late work. With that being said, I am going to prioritize grading work submitted on time. So if you submit an assignment late, know that the grading/feedback may come later in the semester.

Appeals: If you dispute a grade given to you, **written** complaints may be submitted within **one week** of receiving the grade. Be forewarned, however, that a disputed grade is just as likely to be **lowered** as anything else.

Disability Accommodations: Qualified students with disabilities who will require disability accommodations in this class are encouraged to make their requests to me at the beginning of the semester. **Note:** *Prior to receiving disability accommodations, verification of eligibility from the SAILS office is required. Disability information is confidential.*

Course Schedule

Module 1 – The History of Racial Science and Scientific Racism (Aug 18 - 24) This unit focuses on racial science and scientific racism, and how some early science was developed in the service of establishing a 'scientific' basis for racial hierarchies and justification for colonialism and slavery.

Readings due:

1. Krimsky and Sloan, ch. 1-2 ("A Short History of the Race Concept," "Natural Selection, the Human Genome, and the Idea of Race")
2. Gould, S.J. (1981). "American Polygeny and craniometry before Darwin: Black and Indians as separate, inferior species," *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: WW Norton and Co., p. 30-77).

Watch: The Stories We Tell

Assignments: Discussion Board #1 due by 11:59 pm on Wednesday, August 24th

Module 2 – The Eugenics Movement (1900-1940) and Postwar Racial Science (Aug. 24 - 30)

Readings due:

1. Sinnott, E. W. and Dunn L.C. (1925) "The Problems of eugenics," In *Principles of Genetics: An Elementary Text* (New York: McGraw-Hill, p. 402-415.
2. Allen, G. E. (1997) "The Social and Economic Origins of Genetic Determinism: A Case History of the American Eugenics Movement, 1900-1940 and its Lessons for Today," *Genetica* 99:78-85.

3. Livingstone, F. B. and Dobzhansky, T. (1962). "On the non-existence of human races," *Current Anthropology* 3: 279-281.
4. Morning, A. *Reconstructing Race in Science and Society: Biology Textbooks, 1952-2002*

Watch: The Lynchburg Story

Assignments: Module 1-2 Quiz due by 11:59 pm on Tuesday, August 30th

Module 3 – DNA, Human Genetic Diversity, and Group Membership (Aug 31 - Sept. 5)

Readings:

1. Krimsky and Sloan, ch. 5 "Ancestry Testing and DNA: Uses, Limits, and Caveat Emptor"
2. Tallbear, K. 2013. "Racial science, blood, and DNA," *Native American DNA: Tribal Belonging and the False Promise of Genetic Science*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p. 31-66.
3. Nelson, A. "Genetic Genealogy Testing and the Pursuit of African Ancestry."
4. Nash, C. (2012) Genetics, Race, and Relatedness: Human Mobility and Human Diversity in the Genographic Project, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 102:3, 667-684

Viewing: *Skin Deep: The Story of Sandra Laing*

Assignments: Discussion board #2 due by 11:59 pm on Monday, September 5th

Module 4 – Forensic DNA Databases, Race, and the Criminal Justice System (Sept. 5 - 11)

Readings:

1. Krimsky and Sloan, Ch. 3-4 ("Racial Disparities in Databanking of DNA Profiles," "Prejudice, Stigma, and DNA Databases")
2. Kahn, Johnathan. "Forensic DNA and the Inertial Power of Race in American Legal Practice," *Genetics and the Unsettled Past: The Collision of DNA, Race, and History*, Keith Wailoo, Alondra Nelson, and Catherine Lee. Newark: Rutgers University Press, 2012, p. 114-142.
3. (Begin reading *Henrietta Lacks* so that you can finish by next week)

Viewing:

1. *The Dark Side of Genetic Genealogy*
2. *Behavior, Genetics, and the Criminal Justice System*

Assignments: Module 3-4 quiz due by 11:59 pm on Sunday, September 11

Module 5 – Racialized Medicine (Sept. 11 - 17)

Readings:

1. Skloot, Rebecca. *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*
2. Krimsky and Sloan, Ch. 8 (“Evolutionary versus Racial Medicine”)

Viewings:

1. The problem with race-based medicine (Dorothy Roberts)
2. Interview with Rebecca Skloot (NPR *Fresh Air*) (audio)

Assignments: Discussion board #3 due by 11:59 pm on Saturday, Sept. 17

Module 6 – Intelligence, Athleticism, and Race (Sept. 18 - 24)

Readings:

1. Krimsky and Sloan, ch. 9-10 (“Myth and Mystification: The Science of Race and IQ,” “Intelligence, Race, and Genetics”)
2. Alland, A. (2002) “Race and IQ,” *Race in Mind: Race, IQ, and Other Racisms*.
3. *A Level Playing Field*
4. *Sports Genetics and the natural athlete*

Viewing: Race and Intelligence

Assignments: Module 5-6 Quiz due by 11:59 pm on Saturday, September 24

Final Paper (**assignment opens**, due at the end of the semester on Oct. 4th)

Module 7: Race and Genetics in Public Discourse (Sept 24. - 30)

Readings:

1. Gravlee, C. (2009) How race becomes biology: embodiment of social inequality, *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 139:47-57.
2. Krimsky and Sloan, Ch. 11, 12, and conclusion ("The Elusive Variability of Race," "Race, Genetics and the Regulatory Need for Race Impact assessments," "Conclusion: Toward a Remedy for the Social Consequences of Racial Myths")

Viewing: The Stories We Tell: Finding Your Roots, Season 3

Assignments: Discussion Board #4 due by 11:59 pm on Friday, September 30th

Module 8: Conclusions (Oct. 01 - 04)

Final Quiz, module 7-8 due Tuesday, October 4 by 11:59 pm

Final paper due Tuesday, October 4 by 11:59 pm

Final Grades Available by 11:59 pm on October 9