African American Studies 188A: Race, Science, and Society

Tues/Thurs 12:30-1:45pm (Winter 2020)
Haines Hall Room A25

Professor
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Tues. 2-3pm
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Course Introduction

The idea that races reflect inherent biological differences between social groups has been a prominent aspect of European and American thought since at least the Enlightenment. While there have been moments of refuting this way of thinking—most notably, the social constructionist thesis emerging as a dominant framework in the aftermath of WWII—fixed biological conceptions of race haunt contemporary bio-medical research, where race continues to be measured at nearly every scale of human biology: from molecules up to intelligence and health. This course explores the reasons for this persistence through an engagement with theory and in-depth analysis of biological research. Close attention will be paid to the relationship between developments within American history and the production of scientific knowledge about race; for it is in this relationship that the perils and promise of science reveal themselves.

Reading Materials and Course Website

There are two required books for this class, which should be in the bookstore:


Additionally, weekly readings will be available on CCLE as pdfs or url links.

**Grading**

Participation & Attendance (10%)

Reading Quizzes (60%)

There will be 6 reading quizzes that will be conducted online on CCLE. Each will be worth 10% of your grade. They are intended to encourage you to do the readings and to attend class on time and to be prepared. The questions are not difficult, but they depend on your having read the readings, attended the lectures, and taken notes. If you fail to take a quiz during the time they are open on CCLE, they cannot be made up.

Essays (30%)

Students will complete 3 short essays (2/4; 2/27; 3/12), each worth 10% that are to be submitted via Turn it In at by the indicated time. Late submissions will not be graded or accepted.

**Late Assignments Policy**

This class has a strict late assignments policy. None will be accepted without an official excuse.

**Grade Negotiation**

Grading decisions are final and cannot be appealed unless a clear error has been made. You are welcome to visit the TAs during their office hours to discuss strategies for improving your future performance.

**Academic Accommodations**

If you are already registered with the Center for Accessible Education (CAE), please request your Letter of Accommodation on the Student Portal. If you are seeking registration with the CAE, please submit your request for accommodations via the CAE website. Please note that the CAE does not send accommodations letters to instructors—you must request that we view the letter in the online Faculty Portal. Once you have requested your accommodations via the Student Portal, please notify us immediately so we can view your letter.

Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations should submit their request for accommodations as soon as possible, as it may take up to two
 weeks to review the request. For more information, please visit the CAE website (www.cae.ucla.edu), visit the CAE at A255 Murphy Hall, or contact by phone at (310) 825-1501.

**Academic Integrity**

We take matters of academic integrity with the utmost seriousness. Your coursework and evaluation are done under the presumption of integrity. Students are expected to behave in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct (https://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/studentconductcode). Any breaches in that integrity will call into question not only the particular assignment, but also all work conducted in the course. All suspected cases of plagiarism or cheating will be forwarded to the Office of Student Conduct. Remember that the plagiarism standard is commission not intention. If you do not know how to cite sources properly, please ask for our guidance. For other information about UCLA's academic integrity policies, including information and resources to help you avoid unintended academic dishonesty, see: http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/integrity.html

**Statement of Affirmation**

We intend to make this classroom a space that affirms all identities and perspectives, including your: race, color, national origin, ethnic origin, ancestry, marital status, religion, age, sex, gender, gender expression, gender identity, transgender status, pregnancy, physical or mental disability, medical condition, genetic information (including family medical history), sexual orientation, political ideology and affiliations, citizenship, or service in the uniformed services. Regardless of background, all students have a right to an equitable education. Because of the multi-faceted and complex nature of our identities, it is imperative that we are committed to affirming one another’s perspectives as a community for all enrolled in this course. We encourage all members to embrace and learn from the diversity in this classroom, school, and university. We want to highlight that discrimination, harassment, or forms of hateful transgressions will not be tolerated in our learning environment. If you have any recommendations about how to make our environment more inclusive feel free to let us know. If you require accommodations due to ADA related concerns or religious events, let us know during the first class session so that we can make arrangements.

**Family Friendly Policy**

Sometimes family care arrangements encounter disruptions. If you are in this class and responsible for another family member’s care, and you have one of these disruptions, you are permitted to bring your family member to class or section so long as circumstances are reasonable (i.e., they’re not going to get everyone sick).
Acknowledging Native Peoples

The professors of this class acknowledge the Gabrielino/Tongva peoples as the traditional land caretakers of Tovaangar (the Los Angeles basin and So. Channel Islands). As a land grant institution, we pay our respects to the Honuukvetam (Ancestors), ‘Ahihirom (Elders) and ‘Eyohiinkem (our relatives/relations) past, present and emerging.

Class and reading schedule

Part I: Problems, History, and Theory

We open our course with a discussion of contemporary problems surrounding the study of race within the life and health sciences. The issues explored here are reoccurring and thus prompt a reconsideration of the cultural and political assumptions that have informed Euro-American ideas about race. We also explore three theses concerning the development of the race concept that bear on how we currently think about scientific knowledge of human diversity.

1) Tue, January 7  Class introduction, problems and concepts


Kahn, J., Nelson, A., Graves, J. et al “How not to Talk about race and genetics” March 30, 2018, BuzzFeed News
https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/bfopinion/race-genetics-david-reich

2) Thu, January 9  Cultural Background of Euro-American Race Science

Smedley, Race in North America, pp. 13-30

Dorothy Roberts, Fatal Invention, “The Invention of Race” pp. 3-25
Terence Keel, *Divine Variations*, “Introduction” pp. 1-21

3) Tue, January 14

Thesis: race concept came from the pure reason of the Enlightenment

Rebecca Anne Goetz, *The Baptism of Early Virginia: How Christianity Created Race*, 1-12


4) Thu, January 16

Thesis: race concept was designed principally out of economic and political justification for slavery

Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492-1800*, pp., 350-370

Terence Keel, *Divine Variations*,

Katherine Gerbner, *Christian Slavery: Conversion and Race in the Protestant Atlantic World*
-- “Protestant Supremacy”, pp. 31-48

*Quiz 1: on CCLE, quiz open from end of class 1/16 to Saturday 1/18 at Noon*

5) Tue, January 21

Thesis: the culture wars divided the Left concerning race science

Andrew Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America: A History of the Culture Wars*
-- “Introduction”, pp.1-7;
-- “Sixties as Liberation”, 9-37

Cornel West, “Radical Historicism” in, *The Ethical Dimensions of Marxist Thought*, xxxi-xxiv; 1-13

Robin Kelly, “Looking Extremely Backward: Why the Enlightenment will only Lead Us Into the Dark” *Yo’ mama’s dysfunctional!: Fighting the Culture Wars in Urban America*, pp. 103-124

6) Thu, January 23

Thesis: the culture wars divided the Left concerning race science


Joseph L. Graves Jr. and Terri Place, “Race and IQ Revisited: Figures Never Lie, but Often Liars Figure” in, *Sage Race Relations Abstracts* Volume 20, Number 2, May 1995

7) Tue, January 28

Thesis: the culture wars have divided the Left concerning race science


*Quiz 2: on CCLE, quiz open from end of class 1/28 to Wednesday 1/29 at Noon*
**Part II: Looking Closely at Population Genetics and Race**

In this section of the class we begin with an examination of scientific and political opposition to scientific racism. We then study the core concepts of population genetics, including the processes that contribute to the genetic diversity of people. Close attention will be given to how claims about human genetic structure (races) engage what is known as the “naturalistic fallacy”: the notion that the patterns scientists observe in the world come prepackaged with intrinsic meaning and do not in any way reflect the interests of the observer. The implications of the naturalistic fallacy are profound for the study of race in the life sciences and spill over into the realm of history, ethics, and modern philosophy. Then, we review what is currently known about human genetic diversity around the globe. Finally, we discuss the contemporary controversy among geneticists about the biological reality of the concept of race.

8) **Thu, January 30**  
Scientific and Political Opposition to Racial Science


Dorothy Roberts, *Fatal Invention*, pp. 26-54

9) **Tue, February 4**  
The “Truth of Nature”, Natural Selection and Human Diversity


Paulson. 2015. “About Your Skin (interview with Nina Jablonski).” *Nautilus* (July 2)


**Essay #1 Due via Turn it In 8pm**
10) Thu, February 6  
Population Genetics and Apportionment of Human Diversity


11) Tue, February 11  
Population Genetics and Apportionment of Human


Quiz 3: on CCLE, quiz open from end of class 2/11 to Wednesday 2/12 at Noon

12) Thu, February 13  
Genetic Admixture: What is it? Why it matters?

Terence Keel, *Divine Variations*, “Introduction” pp. 113-133


LISTEN TO: Science podcast on Mapping Genetic Diversity in Mexico (about 7 minutes: listen to 0:45 through 7:45

http://c778316.r16.cf2.rackcdn.com/SciencePodcast_140613.mp3
13) **Tue, February 18**  
The Race Controversy in Population Genetics & Genomics Today (UPenn travel)

Dorothy Roberts, *Fatal Invention*, “Redefining Race in Genetic Terms” pp. 57-80


**Part III: Genetics, Ancestry, and Identity Politics**

The last two sections of the class consider some scientific and political consequences of individuals and institutions acting on their understandings of race. Identity is both about personal understanding and group belonging and the privileges and responsibilities that go with it. We investigate how genetic ancestry tests are complicated, often double-edged, tools for individuals seeking to understand themselves as well as for groups seeking to regulate their membership.

14) **Thu, February 20**  
Looking for Roots (UPenn Travel)

Video: Motherland, A Genetic Journey ([http://tinyurl.com/ydtl9cd](http://tinyurl.com/ydtl9cd))


“The Sentence” Uncivil Podcast (approx. 25 min. long)

*Quiz 4: on CCLE, quiz open from end of class 2/20 to Saturday 2/22 at Noon*

15) **Tue, February 25**  
The Curious Science of Ancestry Tests


**16) Thu, February 27**

Ancestry Testing and Collective Identity


**Essay #2 Due via Turn it In 8pm**

**Part IV: Racial Health Disparities: Prospects and Problems of Integration**

In the final section of our class we consider dilemmas of using racial categories in medicine. Can we lessen racial disparities in health and disease without reinforcing biological definitions of race—and perhaps reviving biological racism? How do concepts of race affect explanations of racial disparities? How does focusing on racial differences in health help and hinder efforts to lessen disparities?

**17) Tue, March 3**

Health and Embodiment


**Quiz 5: on CCLE, quiz open from end of class 3/3 to Wed 3/4 at Noon**
18) Thu, March 5  
If race is socially constructed, what about health?


19) Tue, March 10  
Racial Profiling in Medicine


*Quiz 6: on CCLE, quiz open from end of class 3/10 to Wed 3/11 at Noon*

20) Thu March 12  
Conclusion

Dorothy Roberts, *Fatal Invention*, “Biological Race in a Postracial America” pp. 287-308


*Essay #3 Due via Turn it In 8pm*