Science, Medicine, and Race: A History

Med. Hist./Hist. Sci./Afr.-Am. 275
215 Van Hise
Tues., Thurs. 2:30-3:45

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This course surveys the medical and scientific constructions of ideas about race and ethnicity since the eighteenth century. We will place the development of racial theories of sickness and health in a broad social and political context - and, in particular, explain the medical salience of race in the settings of slavery and colonialism. Discussions will focus primarily on North America and Europe, but will also explore the making of knowledge about race in global settings.

Your grade will be determined by your performance on three take-home essays and your work in discussion section. We expect that students will have done the readings for lecture, but the bulk of the discussion of the readings and course themes will take place in discussion section. Your discussion grade (25% of the entire grade) will be based upon attendance and your active, informed and regular participation. Our meetings will include some lecture material, but discussions of the readings will be the core of the course. Your regular attendance and active, informed, and regular participation count for 25% of your final grade. The three take-home essay exams will each of constitute 25% of your grade.

Students enrolled for “honors” credit will be required to do additional work. Please consult with the professors during the first or second week of the semester to arrange an honors project.

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, we urge any student with a disability to inform us as soon as possible, so that we may make any necessary accommodations. All such requests are confidential.

Students are expected to adhere to UW policies on plagiarism and to assume full responsibility for academic integrity for all coursework. Students also may not submit assignments that they have submitted for credit in other courses.

All readings are available through electronic reserve. Please download the readings and bring copies of them to class, and in particular, to discussion sections.
Week 1

September 2—Introduction

September 4— Voyages of Exploration and Explanations of Difference

Columbus Describes His First Encounter with "Indians" (1492): 13-17.

Week 2

September 9— The Enlightenment: Classifying Race and Gender


September 11— Science Debates Racial Origins: Monogenism and Polygenism


Week 3

September 16— Science and Colonialism, 1: Racial Immunities


September 18— Science and Colonialism, 2: Culture, Biology, and Disease

Week 4

September 23— Measuring and Mapping Difference


September 25— Evolution and Racial Competition


FIRST EXAM DUE 26 SEPTEMBER BY 5 PM IN JOCELYN BOSLEY’S MAILBOX, LOCATED OUTSIDE MSC 1420.

Week 5

September 30— Race and Slavery


October 2— Evolution and Gendered Notions of Race


Week 6

October 7— Race and Tuberculosis


October 9— Race and Venereal Disease


Week 7

October 14-- Race, Place, and Disease: Plague as a Case Study


October 16— Degeneration and Whiteness under Threat


Week 8

October 21— The “Negro Problem”: Race Traits or Social Conditions?


October 23— Cultural Anthropology and Environmentalism


Week 9

October 28— Race and Mind

SECOND EXAM DUE 29 OCTOBER BY 5 PM IN JOCELYN BOSLEY’S MAILBOX.

October 30— Eugenics

Week 10

November 4— Racial Science and Immigration

November 6—Ethnomusicology and Racial Constructions

Week 11

November 11—Nazism and Racial Science

November 13—Science and Race after Auschwitz
Week 12

**November 18—Decolonizing Science, Deconstructing “Race”**


Frantz Fanon, “Colonial Warfare and Mental Disorders,” in *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. by Constance Farrington (New York: Grove, 1963), 249-310.

**November 20— Social Science and “The Negro Problem” at Mid-Century**


Week 13

**November 25—Black Power and the Redemption of the Body**


**November 27—Thanksgiving**

Week 14

**December 2—Reimagining Science and Race, 1: Race, Space, and the City**


**December 4—Reimagining Science and Race, 2: AIDS, Race, and Sexuality**


Week 15

December 9—Reimagining Science and Race, 3: Race and Research

Film clip: *The Constant Gardener*

December 11— Reimagining Science and Race, 4: The Human Genome Project and Molecular Race


**THIRD EXAM DUE 16 DECEMBER BY 1:05 PM IN JOCELYN BOSLEY’S MAILBOX.**