

The Unfit: American “Race” Cleansing

HIS 382A-01

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Professor Cheryl Logan

Office: MHRA, Rm 2116
E mail: calogan@uncg.edu

Phone: 334-3999
Office Hours: T 4-5 pm, Thurs, 5-6 pm, or by appt

Eugenics was a branch of the life sciences that drove much of American social policy in the early twentieth century. Its goal was to promote morality and progress by cleansing the “superior races” of contamination by “inferior types”, such as the poor, the mentally and physically disabled, and tainted “races” such as Blacks, Jews, and immigrants. Invented in England, pioneered in America and perfected in Nazi Germany, the movement drew on science to structure American society from the 1880s to the 1960s. The course will examine the social and scientific trends that supported the eugenics movement. In the process, we will explore how social context affects the application of science to society in a society that is open to diversity, but often deeply threatened by it.

EVALUATION AND GRADING: Your grade will be based on exam scores as well as in-class and web discussion participation:

25% class participation, assignments and web discussion
75% 3 exam grades

There will be 3 exams, including the final; each will each count 25% of your grade. The final exam will be cumulative and it will occur during the scheduled period for final exams. I will evaluate your work based on:

- written articulation of concepts, theories and historical trends gleaned from the readings
- effective explanations of the ethical issues and contemporary problems raised by biological concepts as they influence cultural diversity
- integration and synthesis of historical trends on exams and in discussions

REQUIRED TEXTS/READINGS:

Texts:

Wendy Kline. Building a Better Race. Gender, Sexuality and Eugenics from the Turn of the Century to the Baby Boom. Berkeley: U California Press, 2001. (ISBN 978-0-520-24674-4)

Elof Carlson. The Unfit. History of a Bad Idea. Cold Spring Harbor, NY: Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press, 2001. (ISBN 978-087969587-3)

Reserve readings:

Gail Bederman, “Theodore Roosevelt: Manhood, Nation, and “Civilization”, Chapter 5, Manliness and Civilization, Univ. Chicago Press, 1995. pp. 170-215. (HQ1075.5.U6 B43 1995)

Angela Frank, “Sterilize all the Unfit” Chapter 6, Margaret Sanger’s Eugenic Legacy. London: McFarland, 2005. pp. 179-202. (HQ766.5.U5 F67 2005)

Edward Larson. “Taking Root” and “Full Bloom”, Chapters 3 and 4, Sex, Race and Science: Eugenics in the Deep South. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1995. pp. 85-145. (HQ755.5.U5 L37 1995)

Angela Frank, “Sterilize all the Unfit” Chapter 6, Margaret Sanger’s Eugenic Legacy. London: McFarland, 2005. pp. 179-202. (HQ766.5.U5 F67 2005)

Alexandra Stern, “Quarantine and Eugenic Gatekeeping on the U. S.-Mexican Border,” Chapter 2 from Eugenic Nation. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005, pp. 57-81.

Alexandra Stern, “Instituting Eugenics in California,” Chapter 3 from Eugenic Nation. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005, pp. 82-114.

Website Resources:

Eugenics Record Office Records: American Philosophical Society
<http://www.amphilsoc.org/library/mole/e/ero.htm>

Cold Spring Harbor Archive of the American Eugenics Movement
<http://www.eugenicsarchive.org/eugenics/>

PBS: Race-The Power of an Illusion
http://www.pbs.org/race/000_About/002_03_a-godeeper.htm

Dolan Learning Center: Buck vs. Bell
<http://karmak.org/archive/2004/06/buckvbell.html>

Against their Will: North Carolina’s Sterilization Program
<http://againsttheirwill.journalnow.com/>

Topics and tentative schedule:

Weeks: January 14-21: Carlson, Chapters 1-5
Cultural and Religions foundations of human hierarchies
Degenerationism: Urbanization, Nationalism, Class and ‘Race’
Physical Stigmata
Hereditry, Poverty and Criminology: Lombroso

Weeks: January 28-February 4; Carlson, Chapters 6-9, Bederman “Theodore Roosevelt: Manhood, Nation, and “Civilization”
Darwinism, Progress, and Social Darwinism
Weismann and the New Genetics
Social Fears of Race Mixing: Roosevelt, Nationalism and Manhood

Psychiatry and the Pathologizing of Diversity

Weeks: February 11-February 18, Carlson, Chapters 10-13, Frank, “Sterilize all the Unfit”

The International Eugenics Movement: 1890-1930
World War I and The Rise of “Negative” Eugenics
Legalizing Eugenics: Immigration restriction and forced sterilization
Buck versus Bell, 1927

First Exam: February 26

Week: March 3, Carlson, Chapter 16
The new nature in Nature versus nurture
Measuring the Mind: The IQ test: the new “moron”

Spring Break, March 8-15

Weeks: March 17-24, Kline, Intro and Chapters 1-3; Stern, “Quarantine and Eugenic Gatekeeping” and “Instituting Eugenics in California,”
Race and Gender as the twin pillars of eugenics
Prostitution, insanity and ‘feble-mindedness’: California leads the way
Immigration as reproductive control

Weeks: April 1-7: Carlson, Chapters 17-19
American praise of Nazi Germany
The Holocaust and changes in American eugenics

Weeks: April 14-21, Kline, Chapters 4-Epilogue
“Reproductive Morality”: Motherhood and Female Sexuality
Changing Definitions of Eugenics: 1930-1960
Saving the family: The Cooper Hewitt Trial
Popenoe and the “Ladies Home Journal”

Second Exam: April 24

Weeks: April 28; Carlson, Chapter 20; Larson, “Taking Root”, “Full Bloom”
Eugenics in the South
“Newgenics” and Backdoor eugenics: health care and biotechnology
The Genome Project, Genetic Testing, and Genetic counseling
Genetics and Epigenetics

Assignment: “Against their Will”: North Carolina’s Sterilization Program
<http://againsttheirwill.journalnow.com/>

Due Date: Reading Day, May 7, 5:00 pm

Final Exam: Saturday, May 10, 12-3 pm (cumulative final)

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY: You will be required to sign the Academic Integrity Policy on all major work that you submit for this course. Please check the *UNCG Undergraduate Bulletin* for full statement of that policy.

ATTENDANCE POLICY: There is no attendance policy; but the participation portion of your grade will suffer from poor attendance. **Please come prepared to talk in class.** After each posting date we will discuss readings and concepts in class; please read the discussion and come to class prepared to address the questions. Your exams will cover the topics discussed, and we will use the topics to illustrate how to frame an informed answer and describe historical trends on the exams. So both the participation portion of your grade and your exam performance will benefit from regular attendance.

I do not give late exams without a documented medical or family emergency. So, please contact me immediately if you have an emergency. Please be courteous and turn off your cell phones in class.

Discussion posts due:

Monday, Jan. 28

Monday, Feb. 4

Monday, Feb. 18

Monday, March 3

Monday, March 24

Monday, April 7

Monday, April 14

Monday, April 28