

HIS 345-01: The 'Unfit': 'Race' Cleansing in the US

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TR: 2:00, Spring, 2010

Office Hours: Wed. 3:30-5pm, or by appt

COURSE CONTENT: 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 biological contamination by 'inferior types', such as the poor, the mentally and physically disabled, and what were considered 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 examines the social and scientific trends that supported the movement to categorize people as more or less fit, and breed a better humanity based on eliminating the 'unfit.' In the process, we will explore how and why we categorize people and how context affects the ways in which science shapes American society in a system that is open to diversity, but often deeply threatened by it.

COURSE CREDIT: HIS Elective (Field II); GR Core: GHP; CAR: GMO

EVALUATION AND GRADING: Your grade in the course will be based on exam scores, in-class writing and participation:

80% 3 exam grades
20% assignments, in class writing and participation (15% for the written assignment)

There will be 3 exams, including the final; the first will count less and the second exam and the final will count a bit more. The final exam will be cumulative and it will occur during the scheduled period for final exams. I will evaluate your work based on your:

- Your written explanation of concepts, theories and historical trends gleaned from the readings
- Your effective explanations of the problems raised by application of biology to society
- Your understanding and synthesis of historical trends larger historical trends

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: UC 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:

Nicole Rafter, "Feeble-minded Women and the Advent of Eugenic Criminology", Chapter 2 from Creating Born Criminals. Urbana: Univ. Illinois Press, 1997, pp. 35-54.

Gail Bederman, "Theodore Roosevelt: Manhood, Nation, and "Civilization", Chapter 5, Manliness and Civilization, Univ. Chicago Press, 1995. pp. 170-215.

Jack London. "Told in the Drooling Ward." Short stories of Jack London: authorized one-volume edition.

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

Required Website:

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

Other Web Sources:

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

ATTENDANCE POLICY: The attendance is required because we will discuss the main concepts and readings in class. **Please come to class having read the assignment, and be prepared answer questions about it in class.** Your exams will cover the topics discussed, and we will use discussion of the readings to practice writing a good answers and describe historical trends on the exams. Short in class writing exercises will occur about every other week; sometimes you will turn them in, and they will ad to your participation grade. Both the participation portion of your grade and your exam performance will benefit from your regular attendance.

I do not give late exams without a documented medical or family emergency. So, please contact me immediately via email if you have an emergency. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, if you contact me later (by a few days or more) you will not be permitted to take a make up.

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 a full statement of that policy at <http://academicintegrity.uncg.edu/complete/>

BEHAVIOR IN CLASS: Please be courteous and turn *off your cell phones* in class.; if you are expecting an important call, leave your phone on in silent mode and let me know before class. If you bring a *laptop to class*, please use it for class work. If you use to check email, surf the web, etc., during class, there is no need to come. So, I will ask you to leave because your behavior can very distracting for students sitting near you who are trying to pay attention.

Topics and Tentative Schedule:

Week: January 19: Eugenics, modern society, and biology:
Nicole Rafter, "Feebleminded Women and the Advent of Eugenic Criminology"
Race and class in America – 1900

Carlson, Introduction, Chapters 1-3, Chapter 16;
Cultural foundations of human hierarchies; why masturbation?

Sex, Race and the authority of science; 1850-1900

Week: January 25: Carlson, Chapters 4-7;
Degeneracy, Degeneration, and Social Darwinism
Constructing Pathology: Diversity and the Poor

Week: February 1: Carlson, Chapters 8-9;
Weismann, Mendel, and the new genetics
Feeble-mindedness and criminality: Unit Characters

Week: February 8: Bederman “Theodore Roosevelt: Manhood, Nation, and ‘Civilization’”;
Darwinism, and the Progressive Era
An ‘American Race’—Madison Grant
Social Fears of Race Mixing: Nationalism and Manhood

First Exam: Feb. 16

Week: February 22: Carlson, Chapters 10-11, Stern, “Instituting Eugenics in California”;
Degenerate families and “parasites”
Institutionalizing Eugenics—David Starr Jordan, Charles Davenport

Week: March 1: Carlson, Chapters 12-13;
World War I and the rise of “negative” Eugenics
Legalizing Eugenics: Immigration restriction, masturbation and forced sterilization
Buck versus Bell, 1927

Spring Break, March 6-14

Week: March 15, Film: The Lynchburg Story;
Carlson, Chapters 14 & 15

Week: March 22 Kline “Better Race”, Introduction, Chapters 1 & 2; “Drooling Ward”
Changing views of women: Threats from the ‘New Woman’
Prostitution, insanity and ‘feeble-mindedness’: Progressive California
Measuring the mind: The IQ test and the new “moron”

Week: March 29: Kline, Chapters 3 & 4
“Reproductive Morality”: Motherhood and Female Sexuality
Changing Definitions of Eugenics: 1930-1960
Saving the family: The Cooper Hewitt Trial

Second Exam: April 6

April 12: Kline, Chapter 5 and Epilogue
Motherhood and Pronatalism in the 1950s
Paul Popenoe, eugenic marriage counseling

Written Assignment on Eugenics in North Carolina, **due April 20**

April 19: Carlson, Chapters 17-19
America's connection to Nazi Germany
The Holocaust and changes in American eugenics

Week: April 26: Carlson, Chapter 20
"Newgenics" and "backdoor eugenics" in biotechnology today
Genetics and epigenetics

Reading Day, May 5

Final Exam: Thursday, May 6, 3:30-6:30 (cumulative)

Course Grading Scale: (for assigning exam grades and final course grades)

99-100%	A+
92-98%	A
90-91%	A-
88.5-89.5%	B+
82-88	B
80-81.5%	B-
78.5-79.5%	C+
72-78%	C
70-71.5%	C-
68-69.5	D+
62-67%	D
59-61.5%	D-
58% and below	F

I have read and agreed to the conditions stated in this syllabus: _____

(Sign)

Print your name: