



*HSHM 455; ER&M 391*

*Course Syllabus, Summer 2025, Session B, June 30 - August 1, 2025*

*T & Th, 9-12:15*

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**Instructor:** Professor Daniel Martinez HoSang ([daniel.hosang@yale.edu](mailto:daniel.hosang@yale.edu))

### **Course Summary**

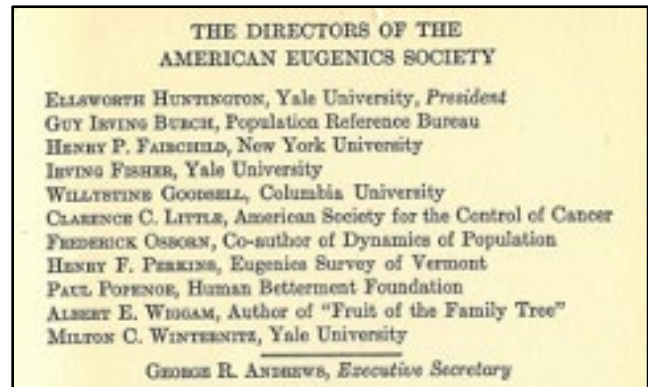
This seminar explores histories of racism within the sciences, medicine and the university, with a particular focus on histories of Eugenics research and advocacy at Yale. A highlight of the course will be trips to view archival collections on campus including those at the Medical Historical Library, Sterling Memorial Library, the Yale Peabody Museum as well as a trip to the Connecticut Valley Hospital cemetery in Middletown, CT.

The course is open to students with a broad range of academic backgrounds and interests. No prior coursework or experience on the topic is assumed or required. Students will have the opportunity to conduct original research in Yale University archives on a topic of their choice with support of the instructor and archivists with the Manuscripts & Archives division.

Students in the course will also be invited to participate in the ongoing work of the Anti-Eugenics Collective at Yale (AECY), whose website can be viewed [here](#). This group of students, K-12 educators, and other scholars conducts collaborative research, collective inquiry, and public education to [realize](#) the “collective creation of an equitable and healthy world for all.”

## Background

In the late 1920s, an organization called the **American Eugenics Society** (AES), led by a prominent set of Yale faculty and administrators, established its national headquarters on the New Haven Green at 185 Church Street. There, leading scholars from across the nation turned to the most advanced research findings in medicine, psychology, economics, sociology, and other disciplines to support their emerging science of “race betterment,” linking the regulation of reproduction to the future health of the nation. Many Eugenacists advocated for involuntary sterilizations of the “unfit,” together with race-based immigration exclusions. Their research and findings were eagerly consumed and championed by colleagues in Nazi Germany, as well as within the many dozens of hospitals, prisons and other state institutions where tens of thousands of Americans were involuntarily sterilized in the early 20th century.



The building housing the AES has long been demolished; their research and findings widely discredited. But the influence and legacy of their work in the university and the academic disciplines persists, often in subtle ways.

The impact and assumptions of Eugenics with its focus on cultural, intellectual and hereditary hierarchies and its disavowals of domination and power, continues to shape the academic disciplines today.

Yet an important body of scholarship and critique, built from social movement practices, has contested these traditions, and reimagined the production of knowledge outside of these parochial constraints.

### A. Seminar Description

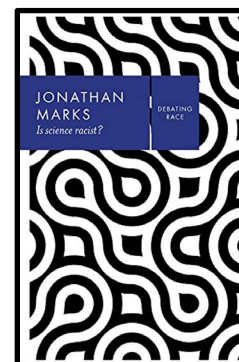
This seminar, intended for students from all disciplines and majors, examines how Eugenics and other academic discourses have shaped the university and the academic disciplines, and engages with the histories of racism in medicine and the sciences more broadly. Many of the assignments and course activities will be collaborative and public facing, as we aspire to use our energy and labor from the seminar to contribute to broader public knowledge and collective action.

As a Yale Summer Session Class, we are operating on a compressed timeline, which makes class attendance and engagement particularly important. Please see the student handbook for Summer Session [here](#) for additional requirements and expectations.

## B. Readings and required text

As the syllabus indicates, most of the weekly readings will be drawn from a combination of scholarly articles and book chapters, with some supplementary audio and video texts. One book is required for purchase from the Yale bookstore or another book seller:

- **Jonathan Marks**, *Is Science Racist?* (Debating Race). Polity, 2017 ISBN: 9780745689227



## C. Assignments (All of the assignments below must be completed in order to pass the course).

1. **WEEKLY ACTIVATION ASSIGNMENTS.** During our first seminar meeting each week on Monday, you will receive a short assignment that will be due the following Monday. The assignment will generally invite you to **apply** some dimension of the materials engaged in the class to a broader context. Several of the assignments will involve contributions to the Anti-Eugenics Collective at Yale [website](#). **(40% of final grade).**
2. **CAPSTONE ASSIGNMENT.** The capstone assignment for the seminar will invite you to produce a paper, roughly 5-7 pages in length, in which you take an object, event, organization, or figure associated with the history of Eugenics or racism in sciences and medicine at Yale, and propose a new public-facing framing and explanation that situates it for a broader public audience. This project will be done in several stages introduced each week. A list of potential topics will be provided during the first class meeting. Collaborative projects are welcome. Details will be provided during the first seminar meeting and during individual meetings with the instructor. You can view a list of possible topics [here](#). **(40% of final grade).**
3. **PARTICIPATION, AFTER CLASS POSTING, AND ATTENDANCE.** Attendance is taken every class; advanced reading and participation are critical. There will be regular in class writing, research and collaboration activities that will also be required, including a Canvas posting after every class meeting. Please notify the instructor in advance if you anticipate missing a class meeting. **(20% of final grade).**

## COURSE SCHEDULE

[Course guide](#) for conducting research on histories of Eugenics using Yale Libraries developed by Bill Landis, Associate Director for Public Services, [Manuscripts and Archives](#), Sterling Memorial Library.

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## **1A: Why are we here? On Eugenics and histories of racism in science, medicine and the academic disciplines (7/1)**

*As this course collaboratively builds on research done by Yale students who have completed similar projects, in our first week, we will engage some of the initial findings of this team about the history of Eugenics research and scientific racism done by Yale faculty, and its ongoing influence on the academic disciplines and the institution.*

- Read in class: **Dora Guo and Jose Garcia**, "[100 Years Later: Eugenics at Yale](#)." *Yale Daily News*, Oct 1, 2021.
- After class discussion post (about 250 words) on Canvas: "What brings you to this class? What questions would you like to explore and answer? What work do you want this class to do for you?" Post on Canvas by 5/31 @10 AM.

## **1B, Eugenics, Science & Knowledge Production in the Modern University (7/3)**

For this class, we will read a range of pieces by advocates of Eugenics centered on the 1921 International Congress of Eugenics at the American Museum of Natural History. The Conference would lead to the creation of the American Eugenics Society, whose founding chair, Yale's Irving Fisher, attended the 1921 conference.

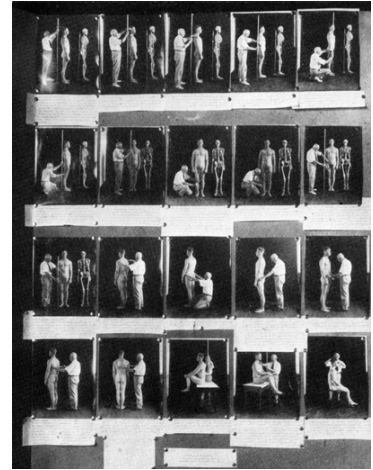
### **ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:**

- (1) How do the primary documents and secondary scholarship (Isenberg, Farber and DeSalle) challenge the dominant assumptions about Eugenics in the history of the U.S.?
- (2) What connections do you see between the claims Eugenicists were making in the 1920s and the contemporary discourse and debates about race, reproduction, public policy, and science?
- (3) How might the American Museum of Natural History attempt to explain its role to Museum visitors today in legitimating the American Eugenics movement? What suggestions would you have for their curators?

### *Readings:*

#### **A. Primary documents: Eugenicists in the their own words:**

- **Henry Osborn.** "The second international Congress of Eugenics address of Welcome." *Science* 54.1397 (1921): 311-313. Available [here](#). (A leading Eugenics advocate frames their understanding of the political stakes and goals of the 1921 Eugenics Conference).
- **CC Little.** "The second international congress of eugenics." Jan 1922; 13(4): 511–524. Available [here](#).
- **Harry Laughlin.** "The second International Exhibition of Eugenics held September 22 to October 22, 1921, in connection with the Second International Congress of Eugenics in the American Museum of Natural History." New York. Vol. 1. Williams & Wilkins, 1923. Available [here](#). This is the official program for the 1921 International Eugenics Conference. Please read the first 60 pages to get a sense of how the organizers and presenters framed and articulated their work. Then please select one of the exhibits/presentations listed in the latter half of the document to read in more detail.



#### B. Situating the Eugenics movement in the history of late 19th and early 20th century US racial formation:

- **Nancy Isenberg.** "Thoroughbreds and Scalawags: Bloodlines and Bastard Stock in the Age of Eugenics." in *White Trash: The 400-Year-Untold History of Class in America* (Penguin, 2016). Available [here](#). (A historian's exploration of the role that Eugenics and hereditarian logics played in distinguishing "good" white Americans from those whose reproduction they alleged would threaten the nation).

#### C. Eugenics research and the role of biologists and geneticists:

- **Steven Farber.** "US scientists' role in the eugenics movement (1907–1939): A contemporary biologist's perspective." *Zebrafish* 5.4 (2008): 243-245. Available [here](#). (A short piece explaining the role of biologists in the 1920s Eugenics movement).
- **Rob DeSalle,** "The Eugenics Movement in Retrospect." *Natural History*, Dec-January, 2022. Available [here](#). (A contemporary discussion of the Museum of Natural History's role in the Eugenics movement).

*Watch/Listen as optional alternative to DeSalle article above:*

- **Rob DeSalle,** "The Role of the American Museum of Natural History in the Second International Eugenics Congress." Presentation at the National Human Genome Research Institute on "The Meaning of Eugenics: Historical and Present-Day Discussions of Eugenics and Scientific Racism." Available [here](#). (25 minute presentation)

## 2A: Eugenic Knowledge Production at Yale and in Connecticut (7/8)

### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- (1) This week we are engaging the scholarship on Eugenics research and advocacy at Yale. What new insights did this work produce for you the ways Yale contributed to the broader American Eugenics movement?
- (2) In week one we read about challenges facing the Eugenics movement in the early 1920s as well as strategies pursued by Eugenics advocates to overcome those challenges? How do you see those challenges and strategies operating in today's readings?
- (3) What questions are you left with after engaging today's texts?

In the second part of this session, we will meet at the Beinecke Library with **Bill Landis**, Education Program Director, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. We'll get an overview of the collections held by Yale Libraries that relate to Eugenics research in the 20th century, learn how to access those collections, and spend time with a selection of these materials. Please see [this handout](#) for a list of materials we will be seeing on Monday.

### Readings:

- **Emme Magliato**, "Within the walls and outside the gates: Yale's laboratory for early 20th-century eugenic knowledge production in New Haven." 2023 Yale undergraduate senior essay in History of Science and Medicine. Available [here](#).
- **Neil Thomas Proto**, "The Darkest Aura and Its Reach: The Embedded Culture of Yale's Eugenics" in *Fearless: A Bartlett Giamatti and the Battle for Fairness in America* (SUNY Press, 2020). Available online at Yale Libraries and Canvas.

**Discussion post question:** Visits to the archive often raise specific research questions about particular histories, figures, forces, concepts and/or events. In this post of about 250 words, please reply to these two questions:

1. Select one document (or group of documents) that you viewed in the archives today. Describe what the document is and how it relates to one or more of the themes you have encountered in course readings so far. Thus, you are being asked to connect a reading from the course thus far to a document you viewed in the visit to the archive on Monday.
2. Describe a question that has emerged for you based on the same archival document. After viewing this document(s), what do you want to learn more about?

## 2B: "Intelligence," Measurement and Scientific Technology (7/10)

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- (1) How do the articles this week by Croizet, Ewen and Ewen, and DuBois give you context to understand the objects from the Peabody viewed in seminar on Wednesday?
- (2) After completing the readings for today, what status do you think cognitive and psychometric testing have in educational systems today? Should they be eliminated altogether? Revised or limited in some way? Continued in the same fashion?
- (3) What questions are you left with after engaging today's texts and viewing the objects?

- **Jean-Claude Croizet**, "The Racism of Intelligence: How Mental Testing Practices Have Constituted an Institutionalized Form of Group Domination." *The Oxford Handbook of African American Citizenship, 1865-Present* Edited by Lawrence D. Bobo, Lisa Crooms-Robinson, Linda Darling-Hammond, Michael C. Dawson, Henry Louis Gates Jr., Gerald Jaynes, and Claude Steele. (An explanation of the racialized foundations of intelligence testing, and the critiques such tests met from early Black psychologists). Available on Canvas under 'Files.'

- **Stuart Ewen and Elizabeth Ewen**, "Morons in Our Midst" in *Typecasting: On the Arts and Sciences of Human Inequality* (Seven Stories Press, 2008). (Provides important cultural, historic, and political context to the rise of categorization, testing and Eugenics in the 1920s). Available on Canvas.

- **W.E.B. DuBois**. "Race Intelligence." *The Crisis*, v.20, n.3 (July 1920). Available [here](#). (This 1920 editorial in the main journal of the NAACP provides a stinging critique of the racist underpinnings of early intelligence tests, confounding the claim that 'no-one knew any better.')
- Background [here](#) on the objects we will be viewing.



## Discussion post question (post by Friday at 10 AM):

How did the articles this week by Croizet, Ewen and Ewen, and DuBois give you context to understand the objects from the Peabody viewed in seminar on Wednesday? That is, what insights did you get about the objects from the reading(s) that you would not have had if you had viewed the objects without the readings?

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- (1) What new insights do you get when you put the readings by Marks, Morrison, and Briggs together that you would not get by reading them alone?
- (2) How does the reading by Marks help you to better understand and situate the visits to the archives last week?
- (3) What connections do you see between DuBois's critique of intelligence testing from Week 2 and Morrison's essay read for today?
- (4) How might Morrison counsel us to approach our work in the archives around histories of Eugenics?

### 3A: "Science," knowledge production, and race (7/15)

- **Laura Briggs**, "Science," from *Keywords for American Cultural Studies* (NYU Press, 2019), edited by Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler. Available [here](#).
- **Jonathan Marks**, *Is Science Racist?*, Chapters 1 and 2.
- **Toni Morrison**, "A Humanist View." Speech delivered at Portland State University, May 1975, [here](#). Or listen to Morrison deliver the speech [here](#) (starts at 7:15 and listen through 43:15).

#### Discussion post question (post by Wednesday at 10 AM):

How has your understanding of the word 'science' changed after completing the reading and discussion from today? What ideas or assumptions did you have about the term that have shifted in light of these texts and exchanges?

### 3B: Histories of Race and Inequality in Medicine (7/17)

For this seminar meeting we will meet with [Melissa Graffe](#), PhD, John R. Bumstead Librarian for Medical History, Head of the Medical Historical Library. We will be meeting at the Medical Historical Library (333 Cedar Street) in the [Cushing Center](#) Conference Room. (You can read more about the history of the Cushing Center [here](#)). We will have a chance to engage some of the artifacts in the Library's collection related to the history of Eugenics and scientific racism at Yale and beyond.

#### Readings:

- **Christopher Willoughby**, *Masters of Health: Racial Science and Slavery in U.S. Medical Schools* (UNC Press, 2022): Introduction, Chapter 5, and Epilogue. Available online through Yale Libraries [here](#).
- **Jonathan Marks**, *Is Science Racist?*, Chapters 3 and 4.

**Discussion post question (post by Friday at 10 AM):**

How did the readings this week by Willoughby and Marks give you context to understand the objects from the Medical History Library viewed in seminar on Wednesday? That is, what insights did you get about the objects from the reading(s) that you would not have had if you had viewed the objects without the readings?

**4A: Reproductive Regulation, Sterilization, and Justice (7/22)**

**ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS**

- (1) What connections do you see between the sterilizations described in the readings for today and the earlier history of Eugenic policy?
- (2) The sterilizations we are reading about for today took place in a range of settings—ICE detention facilities, California prisons, public hospitals, and by the Indian Health Services. What connections can you make between these sites?
- (3) How does the reproductive justice work of SisterSong relate to the history of involuntary sterilizations?

*Readings:*

- **Natalie Lira and Alexandra Minna Stern.** "Mexican Americans and eugenic sterilization: Resisting reproductive injustice in California, 1920–1950." *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 39.2 (2014): 9-34. (Canvas)
- **Reinsberg and Paoletti.** "The U.S. bears International Responsibility for Forced Sterilization of Women in ICE Detention." September 20, 2020. Just Security. Available [here](#).
- Please read the **SisterSong definition of Reproductive Justice** [here](#)
- **Meg Devlin O'Sullivan.** "Informing Red Power and Transforming the Second Wave: Native American women and the struggle against coerced sterilization in the 1970s." *Women's History Review* 25.6 (2016): 965-982. Available on Canvas.
- **Listen to [this podcast](#)** (about 50 minutes) from the *KQED public radio* regarding histories of forced sterilizations in California and efforts at reparations, including today's guest speaker Stacy Diaz Cordova.



- **In class guest speaker:** *Stacy Diaz Cordova* (Via Zoom), niece of one of the victims of involuntary sterilization in California in the 20th century, will describe efforts at repair and reparation.
- In class we will view [No Más Bebés](#) (2015, Renee Tajima-Peña, Virginia Espino)

## 4B: Policing Black Motherhood (7/24)

### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What similarities and differences do you see between the ways that reproduction was regulated by the Eugenicists in the early 20th century to the episodes described in the pieces by Villarosa, Roberts and Johnson?
  - How can you apply the framework of reproductive justice framework described by Roberts to her discussion of the prosecution of Black mothers?
  - **Linda Villarosa**, “The Long Shadow of Eugenics in America.” *New York Times Magazine*. June 8, 2022. Available [here](#).
  - **Dorothy Roberts**, “Reproductive Justice, Not Just Rights.” *Dissent*, Volume 62, Number 4, Fall 2015, pp. 79-82. Available [here](#).
  - **Dorothy Roberts**, “Unshackling Black Motherhood.” *Michigan Law Review*, Feb., 1997, Vol. 95, No. 4, *Symposium: Representing Race. (Feb., 1997)*, pp. 938-964 Available [here](#).
  - **Corey Johnson**, “Female inmates sterilized in California prisons without approval.” *Reveal*. Available [here](#). July 7, 2013.
  - In class we will view selections from [Belly of the Beast](#) (2020, Erika Cohn).
  - We will spend the second part of class at Manuscripts and Archives.
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## 5A: Working Day in the Archives (7/29)

For this class meeting, students will work for the entire period with one of the archival collections in either Manuscripts and Archives, the Beinecke Library, or the Medical Historical Library. Details to be provided in class.

### Readings:

- **Marks**, *Is Science Racist?* Chapter 5.

## 5B: Impossible Justice: Memory & History at the Connecticut Valley Hospital Cemetery (8/1)

For this class meeting, we will be taking a field trip to the [Connecticut Valley Hospital Cemetery](#) in Middletown. Indigent patients at what was formerly called the [Connecticut General Hospital for the Insane](#) were buried there from the facility's founding in 1878 until 1957, encompassing nearly 1700 burials. At least two dozen (and likely more) documented Eugenic sterilizations took place at the hospital during this period. Criteria for admitting patients to the hospital included "insane immigrants, long-lived lunatics, crazed alcoholics, the senile, and almshouse denizens" among the "insane" reflecting the dominant categories used by Eugenicists.

**Readings:** The readings for this meeting are quite short (about 30 pages total) and consist primarily of online blog essays detailing different aspects of the Connecticut Valley Hospital and a related facility in Norwich, CT. There is also a podcast featuring **Kaitlyn Oberndorfer**, a Hartford based teacher and public historian about efforts to document these histories, and a high school lesson plan about the cemetery, its history, and the work of public memory co-authored with a student.

It is important that you complete all of these readings/listening before we leave for the trip, as they will provide important context for our time at the cemetery.

- **Kaitlyn Oberndorfer and Madeline Lewis**, Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts High School: Lesson plan and slide deck titled, "The Connecticut Valley Hospital Cemetery: Humanizing the History Behind Eugenics Medicine." (2023). Available [here](#). (Read through lesson plan slide deck).
- **Ben Gammell**, "Treating the Mind in Times Past." *Connecticut Explored*. Fall 2022. Available [here](#). (A short explanation of approaches to mental health treatment in the 18th and 19th centuries)
- **Sarah Bell**, "Towards a Just Memory of the Asylum." February 8, 2021. Available [here](#) (Short essay about the state hospital in Norwich, CT).
- **Lutz Kaelber**, "Sterilizations in Connecticut." From the Eugenics: Compulsory Sterilization in 50 American States website. Available [here](#). (Provides a background history on Eugenic sterilizations performed in Connecticut).
- **Listen: "Numbers to Names: Restoring Humanity to CT Valley Hospital Cemetery."** November 2, 2021. Available to listen [here](#) or [here](#).

Also, please remember to have your slide ready to present to the class that summarizes your final capstone project proposal. We'll share these slides in our regular classroom when we return from the field trip.

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*Optional readings on race and genomics*

- **Michael Yudell**, *Race Unmasked: Biology and Race in the Twentieth Century* (Columbia University Press, 2015). "Race in the Genomic Era" and "Epilogue." (An accessible discussion about race and population genetics. 15 pages total)
- **Yudell et al**, "Taking Race Out of Population Genetics" *Science*, July 15, 2016. (A discussion of the use of the race concept in population genetics research, 5 pages). **Canvas**.

- Optional readings on Eugenics, Racism and the Body*

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## Other Course Policies

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accommodations because we all learn differently. If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or that form barriers to your inclusion, please let me know as soon as possible. Together we'll develop strategies that can enable you to succeed in the course. I encourage you to visit Student Accessibility Services to determine how you could improve your learning as well. If you need official accommodations, you have a right to have these met. The SAS is located at 35 Broadway, Room 222 and can be reached at 203-432-2324.

**5. SYLLABUS CHANGES:** Changes to the syllabus may be made during the term and will be announced in class and on Canvas.

**6. CANVAS/DIGITAL RESOURCES:** Relevant class materials posted on Canvas are indicated. Please check the Canvas site regularly and make sure it is linked to your email so that you will be notified of announcements and updates.