The Race Concept: History and Consequences in Science and Medicine
STS-UY 3904-B [19749], Fall 2015
2:30 to 4:20 pm, Mondays and Wednesdays, Room JAB 678
Department of Technology, Culture and Society
New York University Polytechnic School of Engineering

Instructor
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Office Hours
Generally, I’ll be available on from 1–2 pm on Mondays when classes are in session. Weekly, I’ll provide details on my availability on my Google calendar (NetID is csl261, or go to http://tinyurl.com/chrisleslie). If the times I list are not convenient, contact me to make an appointment.

Prerequisite
Students must have completed EXPOS-UA 1 and EXPOS-UA 2 (or equivalents) before taking this course.

Course Description
Why do STS scholars say that race is socially constructed? If it is, then why is there still racism? If it is not, then why are there racial disparities in, for instance, health care? These perplexing questions can be understood through an historical survey of the race concept, starting in the enlightenment and moving forward to the present day.

Because today we are egalitarian in our understanding of race, it can be difficult to imagine how these concepts were once more rigid. Reputable scholars once tied their understanding of an individual’s personality and potential to his or her race. This unfortunate way of thinking is seen in what is known as the nineteenth century American school of anthropology, the racial policies of the eugenics movement, and of course the Final Solution. Even so, there were those who sought alternative explanations for difference. With the growth of scientific disciplines, these reified notions of race and gender began to give way – but not without resistance. Thus, an important part of this course is to understand how the paradigm shifted.

Our investigation of the race concept has more than an historical interest, however. By critically examining the logic of classification used to construct difference in living populations and the methodologies that lurk behind the conclusions, we become better able to identify the legacy of scientific racism in our current time, especially with regard to medicine. The study of racialization can also train us to appreciate the connections among science, technology, and society. Finally, I hope that by getting into the habit of finding historical assumptions behind what is natural, we are better prepared to be skeptical about what we presume to be natural in many fields and realize the arbitrariness of unexamined scientific fact.

Objectives
This semester you will learn about:

- The issues raised by modern science and technology.
- The historical development of scientific concepts relating to race
- How the conduct of science changes in different historical periods
- Fundamental terms and concepts of Science and Technology Studies, like constructivism, essentialism, and paradigm shift
Structure
Most class time is devoted to lectures about course topics, discussion of the reading assignments, and in-class analysis of primary source material. Although a portion of our class is devoted to discussion, this discussion is guided and you should consider the content to be just as important as a lecture.

Readings
You must purchase these books:
- Adrian Desmond and James Moore, *Darwin’s Sacred Cause: Race, Slavery and the Quest for Human Origins*. Chicago University Press.

You might enjoy having a paper copy of Charles Darwin’s *Voyage of the Beagle*, although the text is available online. Other assignments will be found online and in NYU Classes (http://newclasses.nyu.edu).

Please let me know well in advance of class if you have any trouble locating a required reading.

Grading
Class components are weighted as follows: Letter grade equivalents are:
- Clickers and Quizzes 20% A: 90–100 (90–94 = A-)
- Papers (10% each) 20% B: 80–89 (87–89 = B+) 80–82 = B-)
- Exams (20% each) 60% C: 70–79 (77–79 = C+) 70–73 = C-

Requirements
*Accommodations:* If you are student with a disability who is requesting accommodations, please contact New York University’s Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at (212) 998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu. You must be registered with CSD to receive accommodations. Information about the Moses Center can be found at http://www.nyu.edu/csd/. The Moses Center is located at 726 Broadway on the 2nd floor.

*Attendance:* On-time attendance for the entire class period is mandatory. Students who miss four or more classes automatically fail the course. For the purposes of attendance, missing fewer than twenty minutes counts as one-third of an absence (arriving late, departing early, leaving the room). Missing more than twenty minutes counts as an absence. Doctor’s notes or other documents are not necessary, but if you must miss class, it is your responsibility to find out from a classmate what you missed.

*Attentiveness:* Please pay attention during class and avoid behaviors that distract others. Do not eat, drink, or sleep during class. You should not use electronic devices, such as cell phones or laptops, at all. Do not hold side conversations; if someone tries to talk to you during class, tell him or her to speak to you after class. Do not bring visitors without advance permission.

*Clickers:* During the class period, I’ll use clickers to take attendance, conduct surveys of attitudes and opinions, and evaluate your understanding of material in the discussion. Your responses to the questions will impact your final grade and attendance, so please notify me if you are having any problem with the clicker. Answering a survey question will earn you 10 points; answering an evaluation question correctly is worth 10 points and incorrectly is worth 7 points. Because these responses count toward your grade, showing someone your answers is considered cheating.

*Examinations:* There are three exams during our regular class meetings. They consist of short answer and essay questions. Each is cumulative and closed-book.

*Honesty:* Please be advised that I take the University policy about academic dishonesty seriously and will punish cheating or plagiarism (passing off other people’s ideas as your own) by awarding a grade of “F” for the course and referring cases to Student Affairs for further action.
Participation: There is no grade for participation. I encourage you to participate, so that the course discussions reflect your interests. If you are the kind of person who likes to participate, I encourage you to make a space for others who might be shyer.

Preparation: According to New York State guidelines, a student should spend at least two hours to prepare for each hour in class. Thus, for this course, you can expect to spend at least eight hours per week outside of class getting ready for class. Please plan accordingly so that you can read thoroughly, write carefully, and reflect thoughtfully.

Quizzes: There will be unannounced quizzes on the reading assignments and course lessons. You may consult your own handwritten notes, but not books or printouts, for these quizzes. If you miss a quiz due to lateness or absence, you shall receive a zero.

Papers: You will write two papers of at least 1,000 words (three full pages) each for this class. Both must be uploaded to NYU Classes and scanned by Turnitin before 10 am the day after the deadline; no late papers will be accepted. You must document your sources in MLA or Chicago author-date style, both in the text of the paper and at the end in your works cited section. Note that, according to NYU policy, I cannot accept papers emailed to me; for this reason, leave plenty of time before a deadline. If you are having trouble uploading your paper to Turnitin, contact the Help Desk at (212) 998-3333 for assistance.

How to Do Well

1. Be on time. At the start of class, you will notice that I provide a preview of what is coming up and also answer questions. If you regularly miss these first minutes, you will start to feel the uncomfortable sensation that you do not know what is going on. Keep in mind that trains, subways and buses usually take much longer than they “should,” so plan accordingly. Being late once is ok; it happens to everyone. If you are always late, then you are doing something wrong.

2. Ask questions. Please raise your hand at the beginning of class or during a presentation. It does little good to whisper to the person next to you; instead, feel free to ask me for clarification. Also, use office hours or write an e-mail message for additional information.

3. Take notes, even if I am not writing on the board. Taking notes helps you stay focused on the material we are studying. Note taking also serves another purpose: it helps you to get used to writing about the course materials in your own words. Because the evaluation in this course is written, taking notes is valuable practice (and good exercise for your writing muscles!). There is no need to write down everything I say, but make sure you take down interesting ideas and connections to the course themes. Go over your notes after class to fill in the gaps.

4. Read actively. Prepare by reading the assignment for the day carefully before class. Mark key phrases and passages that have to do with the ideas in the course. Take notes like you are preparing a laboratory notebook – write down what you think is important, with examples, and prepare questions you want to ask.

5. Work proactively. Start an assignment when it is assigned, not when the deadline is looming. It sometimes takes a little bit of time wondering about an assignment before you make progress, and there are often times that you need guidance. If you wait until the last moment to get started, you cannot negotiate these hurdles adequately.

6. Prepare for emergencies. Things often go wrong during the semester; there are always computer problems and unfortunately there are family emergencies as well. It is important to plan for the unexpected by making backup copies and to be ready to hand in a paper or assignment well in advance of the deadline in case there is an unexpected calamity that will prevent you from using the last days before a deadline.
Bibliography

I shall refer to these standard reference books during the semester. Because you may find them useful, I have placed them on reserve in the Bern Dibner Library where possible.


---. *Race, Language and Culture*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1940.


Tentative Assignment Schedule

Wednesday, Sept. 2  Introduction

Wednesday, Sept. 9  Race and the New World

Dorothy Roberts, “The Invention of Race.” *Fatal Invention.*

Monday, Sept. 14  Enlightenment

Wednesday, Sept. 16  Africa

Monday, Sept. 21  Rise of Evolution
Jean Baptiste Lamarck, excerpt from *Zoological Philosophy.*


Wednesday, Sept. 23  Environmentalism
Mark Harrison, “‘The Tender Frame of Man’: Disease, Climate and Racial Difference in India and the West Indies, 1760–1860."

Monday, Sept. 28  Building Blocks of Evolution
Phillip Appleman, “Scientific Thought: Just Before Darwin.”

Wednesday, Sept. 30  Exam 1

Monday, Oct. 5  Darwin and His Contemporaries
Introduction and Chapter 1 of Desmond and Moore, *Darwin’s Sacred Cause.*

Wednesday, Oct. 7  Voyage of the Beagle
Charles Darwin, Chapter 8 (Banda Oriental and Patagonia), Chapter 10 (Tierra del Fuego), Chapter 17 (Galapagos Archipelago), Chapter 18 (Tahiti and New Zealand) and Chapter 21 (Mauritius to New England) from *Voyage of the Beagle.*

Tuesday, Oct. 13  Slave Countries
Chapters 2–5 of Desmond and Moore.
Wednesday, Oct. 14  Varieties and Humans
Chapters 6–8 of Desmond and Moore.

Monday, Oct. 19  Aftermath of Evolution
Chapters 9–end of Desmond and Moore.

Wednesday, Oct. 21  Darwin and Polygenesis
Charles Darwin. Chapter 7 (“On the Races of Man”) of Descent of Man

Monday, Oct. 26  Social Darwinism
Richard Hofstadter, chs. 2–4 and 9 of Social Darwinism in American Thought
Lewis H. Morgan, Part 1 of Ancient Society.

       PAPER 1 DUE

Wednesday, Oct. 28  Neo-Lamarckianism

Monday, Nov. 2  Neo-Lamarckianism, continued

Wednesday, Nov. 4  The Darwinian Synthesis
Diane B. Paul. “‘Whose Country Is This?’ Eugenics and Race.” Controlling Human Heredity.
Vassiliki Betty Smockovitis. A ‘Moving Target’: Historical Background on the Evolutionary Synthesis.” Unifying Biology.

Monday, Nov. 9  Exam 2

Wednesday, Nov. 11  The UNESCO Statement
Monday, Nov. 16  
**Revival of the Race Concept**  
James E. Bowman. “Genetic Screening: Toward a New Eugenics?”  

Wednesday, Nov. 18  
**Review of Where We’ve Come**  
Dorothy Roberts. *Fatal Invention*. Reread Chapter 1 and read Chapters 2-3.

Monday, Nov. 23  
**Medicine and Race**  
Roberts. Rest of Part II.  

Monday, Nov. 30  
**Racial Medicine**  
Roberts. Part III.

Wednesday, Dec. 2  
**Race and Policy**  
Roberts. Part IV and Conclusion.

Monday, Dec. 7  
**Constructedness of Race**  

Wednesday, Dec. 9  
**Implications of the Human Genome Project**  
Joan Fujimura et al. “Race and Ancestry: Operationalizing Populations in Human Genetic Variation.”  

Monday, Dec. 14  
**Exam 3**