Course Description

Genetics demonstrates that humans cannot be divided into biologically distinct subcategories…

human genetics challenges the traditional concept of different races of humans as biologically separate and distinct.

The American Society of Human Genetics (ASHG), November 1, 2018

"If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences."
Thomas Theorem - William I. and Dorothy Swain Thomas

What is race? What are the consequences of race in our daily life? How do our personal experiences with race intersect with other social structures (i.e., hierarchies of class, color, and gender) and reflect broader issues of inclusion and exclusion, including whom people love and hate? How has science shaped our understanding of race and human diversity? And, how do ideas and practices of race in the U.S. compare with other countries beyond its shores? Indeed, “[f]or centuries, race has been used as potent category to determine how differences between human beings should and should not matter” and explain dissimilarity in, for instance, athleticism, criminality, inequality, intelligence, and morality.1 These ideas remain robust globally, even as diverse sciences have established that human beings are over 99% genetically identical. Still, race continues to play a central role in everyday life, ranging from how people are perceived, categorized, and represented to disparities in health, wealth, education, and incarceration to where people live and work to ancestry testing and race-specific pharmaceuticals. While focusing primarily but not exclusively on the U.S. and African descended people, this course examines the social construction of race and how this concept debunks common misconceptions of race as biology or genetics, also known as scientific racism, while illustrating how and why race is a lived experience thus real in its consequences. Race is an uncomfortable, sensitive topic—the elephant in the room—but to ignore or remain ignorant (i.e., lacking knowledge) of race and its negative effects (i.e., stereotype, discrimination, racism, violence, etc.), ultimately allows for their perpetuation in society.

Drawing principally on reading from the social sciences, film, and other visuals as social texts, this course is a combination of lectures, discussions, and presentations.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, you will:
•be able to recognize common misconceptions about race as biology and science;

• understand in a global context how and why race is a social construction and by whom it was constructed;
• understand the role and consequences of race in the U.S. and other societies;
• understand critical race theories;
• not think about or understand race in the same way.

Required Reading


Steele, Claude. 2010. Whistling Vivaldi and Other Clues to how Stereotypes Affect Us. New York: W.W. Norton & Company

*Reading not from the required books is posted on Canvas. Secondary reading is optional but highly recommended for your assignments, in particular your final project.

Assignments and Grading
A. Participation, Discussion, Reading Response – 20%
You are expected to have read the required material completely and be prepared to discuss the readings in class. Two thought-provoking reading questions are due once a week for in-class discuss and must be upload to the Canvas website no later than 9am the morning of class.

B. Midterm Exam – 30%
The exam consists of an essay question in which you apply the concepts examined in this course to your personal lived experience to demonstrate the role and effects of race in your everyday life.

C. Comprehensive Final Group Project - Student-Led Discussion and Paper – 50%. Guidelines will be provided.

Evaluation
I will evaluate your work based on its clarity, quality, and degree to which you adhere to the assignment. I am fundamentally interested in your demonstrating mastery of the material through the above assignments and your use of academic writing and citing to convey and reflect that understanding. I will provide a grading rubric and guidelines.

Ground Rules & Class Policies
We will examine some difficult, at times painful, issues in this course. These ground rules and expectations are designed to create a safe and open environment in which to exchange—not
police—ideas and **guide your success** in this course. I support students’ rights to express their opinions in keeping with Dartmouth’s [Standards of Conduct](#) and with the following additional guidelines in mind:

- When discussing issues, make sure you are actually “hearing” the other person’s point of view, rather than making assumptions about it. This aspect necessitates active listening in order to evaluate another’s ideas.
- You do not have to agree with each other, or me, but should you disagree, critique the person's position or ideas rather than be critical of the person.
- Listen to all ideas, especially if you do not agree with them because views that run counter to your own may be correct.
- Be open to changing your mind and views, especially when the evidence supports doing so.
- Try not to debate someone’s personal experience. Rather, speak to your own understanding and/or experience.
- Recognize that each of us brings different perspectives and experiences to a discussion, both as individuals and as members of various groups.

**Laptops/Computers**: Studies show that computer use in the classroom can hinder and have a negative effect on academic learning. You may, however, use your laptop computers for note taking **ONLY**, but you must switch off all internet, audio, and video connections. Failure to do so will result in the lowering of your grade.

**Recording the Course**: **It is strictly prohibited to video or audio record this course in any fashion.** Recording your classmates and professor without our permission both violates our rights and jeopardizes the safe environment that I strive to create for open discussion.

**Social Media and Other Devices**: phone use, text messaging, and social media in general are **prohibited in this class**. Studies show that students are less successful if they cannot disconnect from social media, which lessens their ability to focus, listen, and engage with the world in front of them.

**Sleeping in class**: I realize that the sleep monster comes to visit during classtime, but avoid nodding off in class at all costs, especially in front of speakers and your professor! If you feel the urge to sleep, simply stand up and go to the back of the room. Or, if you feel the need to leave class for this purpose, please do so. **You learn nothing falling asleep during class.**

* **Academic Honor Principle**: Students at Dartmouth are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with this Principle.

* **Access and Accommodation for Students with Disabilities**: “Students with disabilities who may need disability-related academic adjustments and services for this course are encouraged to see [me] privately as early in the term as possible. All inquiries and discussions will remain confidential.
Students requiring disability-related academic adjustments and services must consult the Student Accessibility Services Office (205 Collis Student Center, 646-9900, Student.Accessibility.Services@Dartmouth.edu). Once SAS has authorized services, students must show the originally signed SAS Services and Consent Form and/or a letter on SAS letterhead to me. As a first step, if students have questions about whether they qualify to receive academic adjustments and services, they should contact the SAS office.”

*Religious Observance: If the class schedule or requirements conflict with a religious observance, please see me in advance of that date to discuss any accommodations needed.
Course Schedule – Three Parts

This schedule may change to accommodate our guest speakers.
Reading from the required books are listed under the author’s last name; again, all other reading is posted on Canvas.

Part I: Setting a Context – Clarifying our Terms and Concepts

Week 1

Tu Sept 17 Course Overview and Introductions
Reading Entire Syllabus

Th Sept 19 What is Race? What is Racism? Definitions

Secondary Reading

Week 2

Tu Sept 24 Inventing Race
Reading Roberts. “The Invention of Race.” Pp. 3-26

Th Sept 26 Category Formation in an Historical Context
Reading Painter, Neil. 2010. “Johann Friedrich Blumenbach Names White People

Secondary Reading


**Part II: “Scientific” Racism: Race as Biology in the Age of Genomics**

**Week 3**

**Tu Oct 1**

**Reading**


Roberts. “Redefining Race in Genetic Terms.” Pp: 57-81


**Film**

*Race: The Power of an Illusion, Episode I* (in-class)

**Secondary Reading**


**Th Oct 3**

**The Pursuit of Ancestry**

**Reading**


Graves, Joseph L. 2017. “Race ≠ DNA: If race is a social construct, what’s up with DNA ancestry test?” *Teaching Tolerance*. Retrieved May 23, 2018

[https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/summer-2015/race-dna](https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/summer-2015/race-dna)

**Secondary Reading**

Nelson. Chapter 8. Pp. 69-95
Week 4
Tu Oct 8  Race and Intelligence


Th Oct 10  Stereotype Threat and Academic Performance

Week 5
Tu Oct 15  Midterm Preparation

Th Oct 17  MIDTERM EXAMINATION

Part III: Race as a Lived Experience of Racism – Student-Led Discussions Begin

Week 6
Tu Oct 22  The Matter of Black Lives and Policing: The Case of Ferguson


U.S. Department of Justice. 2015. Investigation of the Ferguson Police Department.
Washington, D.C.: Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division.
Required pages: 1-28; 62-70; 79-81

Secondary Reading:

Th Oct 24  Discussion – Peer Review

Week 7
Tu Oct 29  The Question of the N Word and Stigma Reversal - Student-led Discussion
Reading:  Asim. Chapters 1,8,9,10,15. Pp. 9-20; 99-150; 212-235
Secondary Reading


Tu Oct 31  Discussion – Peer Review

**Week 8**

**Tu Nov 5**  The Lived Reality of Whiteness – Student-led Discussion


Secondary Reading


Th Nov 7  Discussion – Peer Review

**Week 9**

**Tu Nov 12**  Race and Europe – Student-led Discussion


Secondary Reading

**Th Nov 14**  Discussion – Peer Review

**Week 10**
Tu Nov 19  Fall term classes end
Fri Nov 25  Final paper due