HTS 3088 Syllabus

Race, Medicine, and Science, Section A, 3 Credits

Spring 2027

Instructor Information

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General Course Information

This course examines the historical and contemporary relationships among race, medicine, and science through the perspectives of sociology and science and technology studies (STS). Students investigate how scientific knowledge and medical practices have shaped racial categories, legitimized social inequalities, and influenced understandings of human difference. The course also explores how scientific institutions, professional practices, commercial interests, and public policies shape the production and application of medical knowledge.

Drawing on sociological theories of race, structural inequality, and medical institutions alongside STS approaches to classification, technology, and scientific authority, students will analyze how racial inequality becomes embedded in biomedical research and practice. Through historical case studies, contemporary controversies, and independent research, students will rigorously examine the social, political, and cultural concept of race and its usefulness as an analytical and political category, with an emphasis on American history.

The course is built around four central questions:

1. **Knowledge:** How is scientific knowledge about race and human difference produced and validated?
2. **Institutions:** How do medical organizations, professional groups, markets, and governments institutionalize particular understandings of race?
3. **Technologies:** How do medical devices, classifications, and computational systems translate assumptions about human difference into clinical and social consequences?
4. **Power and resistance:** Who benefits from these arrangements, who bears their costs, and how do communities challenge them?

This is an active-learning course. Instead of reading a great deal and then listening, you will read a focused amount and then work with it in class: analyzing primary sources

and data, debating, role-playing historical hearings, and auditing the tools medicine and science use today. Most class time is spent doing, and most of your grade is earned in and through that work.

Course Learning Outcomes

This is a Core IMPACTS course in the Social Sciences area.

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help students master the material and support their broader academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

• How do I understand human experiences and connections?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcomes:

• Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior and how historical, economic, political, social, or geographic relationships develop, persist, or change. Upon completion of this course, students will demonstrate that they have met the Core IMPACTS social science learning outcome by writing three short reading responses on how STS concepts relate to race, medicine, and science, preparing for and participating in in-class activities, taking a midterm exam, and writing and presenting a final project related to the course and student interest.

Course content, activities, and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Intercultural Competence
- Perspective-Taking
- Persuasion

Course-specific learning outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Examine the historical development of contemporary racial categories used in scientific medical research
2. Discuss the socio-historical context of the interrelationship of race, medicine, and science
3. Critically review the literature concerning debates of race, medicine, and science

4. Discuss how scientists and medical/health practitioners have described and interpreted perceived human differences
5. Examine how scientists constructed racial difference and how that difference shaped the construction of medical knowledge
6. Situate the topics in socio-historical context (e.g., human experimentation)
7. Examine how racial difference became medicalized

How This Course Works

Weekly rhythm

Tuesdays are typically reading days: each Tuesday has one core reading that everyone completes before class. Thursdays are typically doing days: we apply that reading through a lab, simulation, debate, or speaker session, with little or no new reading. This rhythm keeps the reading load manageable and uses class time actively.

Three tiers of reading

Core readings are required for everyone and are marked in the schedule. Jigsaw readings are split across groups: you read one piece closely and teach it to classmates. Deep-dive readings are optional and are listed at the end of the syllabus as sources for your final paper. Most readings are assigned as excerpts with a guiding question posted on Canvas.

Required Texts and Readings

Roberts, Dorothy. 2011. Fatal Invention: How Science, Politics, and Big Business Re-create Race in the Twenty-First Century. New York: The New Press. (Book available online through the Georgia Tech Library)

All other readings are available on Canvas or online through the Georgia Tech Library.

Course Requirements

1. Participation, Attendance, and In-class activities (20%)

Participation (5%) includes attending class, keeping up on assigned readings, and contributing effectively to class discussions and activities. Students are expected to do **all** the assigned reading thoroughly before coming to class and be prepared to participate actively in class discussions. Most class meetings include a graded activity product (15%) (a lab worksheet, group analysis, or exit ticket). These are graded for completion and thoughtful engagement. Your two lowest scores are dropped, which covers occasional absences; beyond that, you can make up missed work only with an excused absence.

Attendance Policy: Attendance will be taken and is part of your final grade. Beginning with the 4th absence, 1% will be deducted from your final grade. For each successive unexcused absence, an additional percentage point will be deducted from your final grade. For

example, 5 absences would result in a 2% deduction from your final grade; 6 absences would result in a 3% deduction, and so on. Absences as defined by the University Senate (serious illness, illness or death of a family member, university-related trips, major religious holidays) will be excused.

2. Reading responses (15%)

Three times during the semester, you will complete a reading engagement assignment on a core reading by 9 AM the day of class. The response must be a one- to two-page written response (ASA citation, major concepts, summary, critique, and two discussion questions; see the template on Canvas). Your questions feed directly into the opening of class. No credit will be given to responses turned in late or that do not meet the above criteria. Only excellent responses will receive complete credit. **You may not make up responses at the end of the semester.**

By having prepared a response to the material in advance and sharing your evaluations with the rest of the class, it is my hope that you will be better prepared to engage in productive class discussions and that you will gain more from each other's analyses than you would otherwise. I will be looking for clear intellectual engagement.

3. Simulation preparation memos (10%)

Before each of the two class simulations, the Tuskegee hearing and the BiDil advisory committee, you will submit a one-page memo (5% each) that states your assigned role's position, the evidence from course readings that supports it, and the question you most want to put to the other side.

4. Mid-Term Exam 1 (15%)

The exam covers Modules 1 and 2 to assess foundational concepts that will be applied to the final project. The exam will include multiple-choice questions, short answers, and one short essay.

5. Final project milestones (10%)

The research project is built in four checkpoints, each with in-class workshop time:

- Milestone 1: paper topic and social identity map
- Milestone 2: interview protocol and consent script, tested in practice interviews with classmates
- Milestone 3: in-class analysis of how racial categories are used in your two scientific articles
- Milestone 4: full draft, with structured peer review in class

6. Final written paper (20%)

Pick a racialized project that relates to medicine and science (a racialized disease, medical technology, experimentation, algorithm, etc.). The paper must read and cite social science literature on the project, incorporate at least two peer-reviewed secondary sources and at least three course materials, and analyze two scientific articles that

investigate your topic to determine how racial categories are used and what assumptions are made. Identify a local or national organization working toward racial justice on your topic and describe its work. Interview at least two people who have experienced the racialized project (patients, providers, scientists, activists, etc.), using the consent script you developed in Milestone 2. Include your social identity map.

7. Poster showcase (10%)

Present your topic, background, data, and preliminary findings at a poster showcase open to community partners and guests. Classmates give structured written feedback on each poster.

Course Evaluation

Component	Weight
Participation and In-class activities (lowest 2 dropped)	20%
Reading Responses engagement (3)	15%
Simulation preparation memos (2)	10%
Mid-Term Exam (multiple choice/short answer/short essay)	15%
Final project milestones (4)	10%
Final paper	20%
Poster showcase	10%
Total	100%

Course grade: 90–100 = A, 80–89 = B, 70–79 = C, 60–69 = D, below 60 = F. 70 is a passing grade.

Course Policies

Attendance and/or Participation

In-person attendance is required. I will take attendance each class day. If you miss four days of class (two weeks of instruction) without an excused absence, your grade will be dropped by 1%. Any additional days will result in a 1% deduction from your final grade. You will be excused for Institute-approved absences or personal emergencies. Please refer to these forms if you have an excused absence: https://studentlife.gatech.edu/resources/class-attendance or consult the Catalog for more information on Institute-approved absences and for other guidance on class attendance, including absences for medical emergencies, religious observances, and voting in elections: http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/4/.

Academic Integrity

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act in accordance with the highest ethical standards. Review Georgia Tech's Honor Code and the student Code of Conduct.

Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarism on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, which will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, contact the Office of Disability Services (404-894-2563) as soon as possible to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement

At Georgia Tech, we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgment, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. The Student-Faculty Expectations articulate some basic expectations that you can have of me and that I have of you. Ultimately, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, I encourage you to stay committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech throughout this class.