

Race, Medicine & Science

Last Updated: Mon, 07/14/2025

Course prefix: HTS

Course number: 3088

Section: 1

CRN (you may add up to five):
93592

Instructor First Name: Andrew

Instructor Last Name: Buskell

Semester: Fall

Academic year: 2025

Course description:

This course looks at how changing technologies, scientific theories, and medical practices have shaped, and been shaped by, our understandings of race. It focuses on the intellectual history of scientific work on heredity, eugenics, genetics, and genomic science. The geographical center of the course is the United States, but case studies and vignettes will explore how scientific, medical, and racial concepts function both internationally and globally. Beginning in the late nineteenth century with early views on human evolution and human "improvement", the course ends with an extended examination of commercial DNA tests and how they have been taken up and used by different groups within the United States.

Course learning outcomes:

The central aims of this course are to develop:

1. **Course specific knowledge**, i.e. to:
 1. Recall changes in theories of human evolution, heredity, and racialization over the 20th century.
 2. Describe important stages in the transformation of genetic theories and technologies by situating these in their local institutional and political context, and
 3. Illustrate the importance of particular technologies, persons, and contexts.
2. **Skills in engaging with historical materials**, i.e. to:
 1. Analyze primary source material and relate it to histories of technological, social, and cultural change.
3. **Critical reasoning skills as they are applied to historical materials**, i.e. to:

1. Develop skills for assessing secondary source material; notably, to critically appraise key arguments and ideas,
2. identify and distinguish historical and historiographical approaches,
3. and discern and critique background assumptions and positionality.
4. **Communication and writing skills**, i.e. to:
 1. Craft critical historical essays that draw on both primary and secondary source material

Required course materials:

All required and recommended texts for the course will be made available through Canvas and Perusall (more on this below). Optional texts that complement this course:

1. Saini, Angela. 2019. *Superior: The Return of Race Science*. 4th Estate.
2. Yudell, Michael. 2014. *Race Unmasked: Biology and Race in the Twentieth Century*. Columbia University Press. ([Available online through the GaTECH Library](#))

Grading policy:

Assignments

1. Readings
 - Total grade percentage: 25
 - Assessment: Complete (1) | Incomplete (0)
2. Participation
 - Total grade percentage: 15
3. Tests
 - Total grade percentage: 40 (2x 20)
4. Final Project
 - Total grade percentage: 20

Grade scale

- **A: 90 - 100**
- **B: 80 - 89.9**
- **C: 70 - 79.9**
- **D: 60 - 69.9**
- **F: 0 - 59.9**

Attendance policy:

Showing up is required and expected. Though there is no penalty for missing a single session—there are repercussions for missing multiple classes. If you miss **5 or more classes**, the highest grade you can achieve is a "B", 7 or more a "C", and 9 or more a "D". More on my course policies can be found [here](#).

Academic honesty/integrity statement:

Honesty and transparency are important features of good scholarship. On the flip side, plagiarism, cheating, and the unattributed use of artificial intelligence are serious academic offenses with serious consequences. If you are discovered engaging in these behaviors in this course, you will earn a failing grade on the assignment in question, and further disciplinary action may be taken.

Your work should be crafted and written on your own. You may talk with others about your ideas—you may even use the ideas discussed in class seminars—but these ideas must be made your own. That means working by yourself to develop your own ideas, providing your own reasons, and explaining things in your own words.

You are required to cite all sources you use in your submitted work. This includes both direct quotations and cases where you use someone else's ideas. "Sources" include papers, journals, conversations, anything found on the internet, and so on. Basically, if the thought did not originate with you, you should provide an in-text citation and a reference list. For a clear description of what counts as plagiarism, cheating, and/or the use of unauthorized sources, please see the Student Code of Conduct: <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/19>.

If you have questions about my integration of the university's honor code into this course, please do not hesitate to ask: my aim is to foster an environment where you can learn and grow, while ensuring that the work we all do is honest and fair. For more information about Georgia Tech's standards with respect to academic integrity, you can also check out the following link: <http://honor.gatech.edu/>

Core IMPACTS statement(s) (if applicable):

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of 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 master course content, and support students' broad 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.

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

- Intercultural Competence
- Perspective-Taking

- Persuasion