EUGENICS AND ETHICS
Philosophy 457 and 757

GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The primary goal of this course is to examine two major eugenics programs of the 20th century and to explore their implications for human genetics and for relationships among people of diverse ethnic backgrounds. If the course succeeds, students will emerge from the course with a clearer concept of eugenics, with detailed knowledge of two major historical eugenics programs, and with the capacity to recognize and critically evaluate eugenic theses and arguments.

TEXTBOOKS

Michael Burleigh, Death and Deliverance: 'Euthanasia' in Germany c. 1900-1945 (1994) [cited as Burleigh, DD]

Frank Dikötter, Imperfect Conceptions: Medical Knowledge, Birth Defects, and Eugenics in China (1998) [cited as Dikötter, IC]

Daniel J. Kevles, In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity (1985) [cited as Kevles, INE]

Robert N. Proctor, Racial Hygiene: Medicine under the Nazis (1988) [cited as Proctor, RH]

OVERVIEW

January 12: Introduction to the course

   Video: The Lynchburg Story

Part I: Eugenics in the United States, 1900-1950

January 19: Arguments in favor of eugenic sterilization; legislation and judicial review

January 26: Interlude: Congressional hearing on human gene therapy

February 2: Arguments against eugenic sterilization

February 9: Comparative perspectives – the United States and Great Britain: I

   Video: The Black Stork, or Are You Fit to Marry? (excerpts)

February 16: Comparative perspectives – the United States and Great Britain: II

Part II: Eugenics in Germany under National Socialism

February 23: Racial hygiene: I

   Video: In the Shadow of the Reich: Nazi Medicine

March 1: Racial hygiene: II

Spring break

March 15: The euthanasia program in Nazi Germany: I

   Video: Selling Murder: The Killing Films of the Third Reich

March 22: The euthanasia program in Nazi Germany: II

March 29: Site visit to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Part III: Eugenics in the contemporary world

April 5: The Bell Curve and its critics

April 12: Other current controversies in "racial research": I
April 19:  Other current controversies in "racial research": II
April 26:  Eugenics in 20th-century China
May 3:    Recent developments in Japan and the United States

REQUIRED READINGS

January 12:  Introduction to the course

  Video:  *The Lynchburg Story*

**Part I: Eugenics in the United States, 1900-1950**

January 19:  Arguments in favor of eugenic sterilization; legislation and judicial review


  Please write a two-page (double-spaced) critique of one of these four documents.

January 26:  Interlude: Congressional hearing on human gene therapy

  No new readings.

  Please attend this Senate hearing, which begins at 9:30 and concludes at 12:00 noon, if you can.

February 2:  Arguments against eugenic sterilization

  Abraham Myerson, *The Inheritance of Mental Diseases* (Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins, 1925), excerpts.


February 9: Comparative perspectives – the United States and Great Britain: I

Video: *The Black Stork*, or *Are You Fit to Marry?* (excerpts)


February 16: Comparative perspectives – the United States and Great Britain: II


**Part II: Eugenics in Germany under National Socialism**

February 23: Racial hygiene: I

Video: *In the Shadow of the Reich: Nazi Medicine*


March 1: Racial hygiene: II

Proctor, *RH*, pp. 177-312.


Spring break
March 15: The euthanasia program in Nazi Germany: I

Video: *Selling Murder: The Killing Films of the Third Reich*


Letter of Cardinal Bertram of Breslau to Reichs-Minister Lammers (August 11, 1940) and letter of Cardinal Faulhaber of Munich to Justice Minister Gürtner (November 6, 1940); reprinted in "Correspondence: German Catholic Bishops' Protest," *Thought* 20(79): 751-760; December 1945.

March 22: The euthanasia program in Nazi Germany: II


Bishop Clemens August Graf von Galen, sermon preached in Münster, August 3, 1941 (English translation).


March 29: Site visit to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Background materials on the Museum

**Part III: Eugenics in the contemporary world**

April 5: *The Bell Curve* and its critics


Short paper due.

April 12: Other current controversies in "racial research": I

April 19: Other current controversies in "racial research": II


Please find, copy, and distribute to your classmates one example of racist propaganda found on the World Wide Web.

April 26: Eugenics in 20th-century China
Dikötter, _IC_, pp. 64-183. (Graduate students: Please read the entire book.)


May 3: Recent developments in Japan and the United States


REQUIREMENTS

The primary requirement for this course is the completion of all assigned readings in advance of the class session in which they will be discussed, as well as active participation in seminar discussions.

Each student will be asked to open a session of the seminar by summarizing and critiquing an article or a chapter in a book. This introduction to a reading should be crisp and concise and should be limited to ten minutes.

A two-page critique and a short paper (5-8 double-spaced pages) will be due on January 19th and April 5th, respectively. The short paper should discuss some aspect of the eugenics program in the United States or in Germany under National Socialism.

All seminar members will be expected to participate in the class visit to the Holocaust Memorial Museum on March 29th.

A final term paper will be due on Friday, May 12th, nine days after the final seminar session. The final paper can be devoted to any eugenics topic past or present. Undergraduate-student papers will have a page limit of 12 to 15 pages. Graduate-student papers will have a page limit of 25 to 30 pages.

Papers should be analytical and critical rather than purely descriptive. That is, they should be philosophical papers.

The components of the final grade are as follows:

- Regular attendance, class participation 30%
- Two-page critique 10%
- Short paper 15%
- Introduction to class session 15%
- Final term paper 30%

Please submit papers on time or call or e-mail in advance of the deadline date with a request for and a justification of an extension.