EUGENICS AND ETHICS

PHIL-457 and -757

Course Goals and Objectives

The primary goal of this course is to stimulate critical reflection on the complex interrelationship between genetics and society. In this effort we will review two past attempts to integrate genetic knowledge into social policy. Many states of the United States enacted eugenic programs during the first half of the 20th century, and U.S. federal policies reflected eugenic presuppositions, as well. Germany also introduced a thoroughgoing national eugenics program in the 1930s and 1940s. We will examine these two programs in some detail, asking ourselves whether the programs were based on good science, who was affected by the programs, and whether the programs were morally justifiable. In the concluding section of the course we will read and evaluate recent literature on the hotly-debated issue of race or ethnicity and genetics.

Two class trips will assist us in our deliberations. The first trip will be to a special exhibition at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. There a Museum historian will provide a guided tour of the exhibition. The second trip will be to an institution for mentally ill or intellectually disabled people – the type of institution that was so profoundly affected by American and German eugenics programs.

Audiovisual materials will be shown regularly during class sessions and will complement the readings and the two class trips.
Course Overview

Class 1 (January 13): Introduction to the Course

Inauguration Day: No class (January 20)

Eugenics in the United States, 1900-1945

Class 2 (January 27): Excerpts from primary sources on eugenics in the U.S.: 1

Class 3 (February 3): Excerpts from primary sources on eugenics in the U.S.: 2

Class 4 (February 10): Diane Paul’s perspective on the American eugenics movement

Class 5 (February 17): Daniel Kevles’s perspective on the American eugenics movement

Eugenics in Germany, 1920-1945

Class 6 (February 24): Visit to the Holocaust Museum Special Exhibition on “Deadly Medicine”

Class 7 (March 3): Excerpts from primary sources on eugenics in Nazi Germany: 1

Spring Break (March 10)

Class 8 (March 17): Excerpts from primary sources on eugenics in Nazi Germany: 2

Easter Break (March 24)

Class 9 (March 31): Robert Proctor’s perspective on eugenics in Nazi Germany

Short paper due

Class 10 (April 7): Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann’s perspective on eugenics in Nazi Germany

Class 11 (April 14): Visit to an institution for people with mental illness or intellectual disabilities

Race and Genetics

Class 12 (April 21): Race or ethnicity and genetics

Review and Synthesis
Class 13 (April 28): A look back and a look forward

**Textbooks**


**Required Readings**

*Asterisks designate materials to be distributed in class, placed on reserve, or posted on the Blackboard Web site for the course.*

Class 1 (January 13): Introduction to the Course

Inauguration Day: No class (January 20)

Eugenics in the United States, 1900-1945

Class 2 (January 27): Excerpts from primary sources on eugenics in the U.S.: 1

*Race and Membership*, pp. 62-89, 140-205

*Please read a 10-20 page excerpt from one of the following original sources on eugenics in the U.S. The books have been placed on reserve in the Bioethics Library (Healy 102). Be prepared to report to the class on the source that you choose.*


Charles B. Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics* (1910) [if a copy can be located]
Henry H. Goddard, *The Kallikak Family: A Study in the Heredity of Feeble-Mindedness* (1913) [more options on the next page]


Class 3 (February 3): Excerpts from primary sources on eugenics in the U.S.: 2

*Race and Membership*, pp. 206-239, 266-277, 283-287

*Abraham Myerson, The Inheritance of Mental Diseases* (Baltimore: Williams & Wilkens, 1925), pp. 73-85

*Eugenical Sterilization: A Reorientation of the Problem* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1936), pp. 177-183

*Please locate and study the Image Archive on the American Eugenics Movement that is maintained by the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory. Be prepared to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of this online resource.*

Class 4 (February 10): Diane Paul’s perspective on the American eugenics movement

Paul, *Controlling Human Heredity* (entire book)

Class 5 (February 17): Daniel Kevles’s perspective on the American eugenics movement

Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, Preface and Chapters I, III-IX, and XI-XII (pp. ix-x, 3-19, 41-147, and 164-192)

Eugenics in Germany, 1920-1945

Class 6 (February 24): Visit to the Holocaust Museum Special Exhibition on “Deadly Medicine”

*In preparation for our visit to the exhibition, please spend at least one hour perusing the book *Deadly Medicine: Creating the Master Race* (Washington, DC: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2004). The book is on reserve in the Bioethics Library (Healy 102). Also please explore the Web site of the Holocaust Museum for other materials that are pertinent to our course.*
Class 7 (March 3): Excerpts from primary sources on eugenics in Nazi Germany:


Burleigh and Wippermann, The Racial State, pp. 136-141

* Please read a 10-20 page excerpt of Erwin Bauer, et al., Human Heredity (New York: Macmillan, 1931 (on reserve in the Bioethics Library, Healy 102)

Spring Break (March 10)

Class 8 (March 17): Excerpts from primary sources on eugenics in Nazi Germany:


* Pope Pius XI, Mit brennender Sorge (With Burning Concern), pastoral letter read from all German Catholic pulpits on March 14, 1937; excerpts reprinted in Peter Matheson, ed., The Third Reich and the Christian Churches (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), pp. 67-71.

* Paul Gerhard Braune, Denkschrift (Commentary) for Adolf Hitler, dated July 9th, 1940, and delivered to the Reich Chancellery on July 16th, 1940; original reprinted in Ernst Klee, ed., Dokumente zur “Euthanasie” (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1985), pp. 151-162; excerpts translated in Matheson, ed., The Third Reich and the Christian Churches, pp. 85-88.

* 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.

Easter Break (March 24)

Class 9 (March 31): Robert Proctor’s perspective on eugenics in Nazi Germany

Short paper due

Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, Chapters 1-4 and 7 (pp. 10-117, 177-222)

Class 10 (April 7): Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann’s perspective on eugenics in Nazi Germany

Burleigh and Wippermann, *The Racial State*, Chapters 2-3 and 6 (pp. 23-73 and 136-197)


Class 11 (April 14): Visit to an institution for people with mental illness or intellectual disabilities


*Christopher R. Browning, The Origins of the Final Solution (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), pp. 184-193 and 474-475


Race and Genetics

Class 12 (April 21): Race or ethnicity and genetics


Review and Synthesis

Class 13 (April 28): A look back and a look forward

No new readings; please use the time for reading about the topic of your final term paper.
Course Requirements

The first and most important requirement for this seminar is your careful and critical completion of the readings in advance of each class session and your regular attendance at our weekly class sessions. Please write me an e-mail note or give me a call in advance if you need to miss a session.

You will be asked to keep a journal in which you respond to one reading or to a class trip each week. If the reading is an entire book, please feel free to respond to one section or chapter of the book. Journals will be handed in at the end of the semester.

Your careful reading, as reflected by your participation in class discussions and your journal, and your regular attendance at class sessions will contribute 30% to your final grade.

A second requirement will be the completion and submission of a mid-semester paper. This paper will be due on Thursday, March 31st, and may be submitted either on paper or as an e-mail attachment. This paper should be no more than 10 double-spaced pages in length for undergraduates and no more than 15 pages for graduate students. The evaluation of your mid-semester paper will constitute 30% of your final grade.

The final requirement is the completion and submission of a final term paper, which will be due on Monday, May 9th, one week after the conclusion of classes. The evaluation of the final paper will constitute 40% of your final grade. Final term papers for undergraduates should be 10-20 pages long and for graduate students 15-30 pages long. Your journal should also be submitted on May 9th.

The two papers should be analytical and critical rather simply summarizing a series of historical facts or philosophical arguments. The papers need not be technical philosophical treatises but should reflect your ability to sift historical evidence and/or to analyze arguments. You may wish to argue a thesis but you need not do so. The opening paragraph of each paper should preview the scope of the paper and how you plan to cover your topic. Please use a standard academic format for your footnotes or endnotes.

If unanticipated circumstances require an extension for the submission of either paper or your journal, please contact the instructor in advance of the deadline.

There will be additional readings and several additional class sessions for graduate students in the course. Both the reading assignments and the time and frequency of the supplemental class sessions will be worked out in consultation with the graduate students.