HUM 395 (Humanities Seminar)

“Race/Gender/Sex & Science: Making Identities and Differences”

Fall 2018

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:30-4:50, in Kresge 2-331

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Office hours this quarter (by appointment):
Generally, Mondays, 3:00-4:00 and Tuesdays, 11:00-12:00
1808 Chicago Ave, Rm 206
For exact availability and to sign up for a slot in advance:
https://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/gfkai

A copy of this syllabus can be found on the Canvas site for the course.
Summary:

In this seminar, we will focus on the interplay between science, technology, and medicine, on the one hand, and race, gender, and sexuality, on the other. Taking up a series of controversial issues and cases from the recent past and the present, we will consider the implications of developments in the life sciences for politics, social identity, and cultural belonging. In our readings and discussions, we will examine the roles of science, technology, and medicine in redefining race, gender, and sexuality; the ways in which cultural beliefs about race, gender, and sexuality have influenced scientific research and the development of knowledge; and the efforts by individuals and social movements to challenge scientific institutions and assert new claims about identity, difference, and inequality.

In short, we will keep coming back to two reciprocal questions:

- **On the one hand:** How do cultural ideas about race, gender, and sexuality influence knowledge and knowledge production?

- **On the other hand:** How do scientific claims and technological developments influence cultural understandings of race, gender, and sexuality?

More specifically, over the course of the quarter, we will take up such questions as:

- How many sexes are there, and how do we know?
- What is the scientific status of our ideas about race?
- How are medical and legal ideas invoked in determinations about people’s gender identities?
- How do medical technologies become “gendered”?
- How have new reproductive technologies, and new methods of tracing ancestry, changed notions of kinship and racial belonging?
- Is homosexuality a biologically determined state, and what is at stake in asking the question?
- How should gender, race, and sexuality be taken into account when human populations are studied in clinical research?
- How have scientists and physicians sought to study and repair human sexual functioning?

Our goal is not to resolve these controversial issues but, rather, to understand their stakes as well as the ways in which different people, groups, and social institutions have taken positions in relation to them.
Course Requirements:

Your grade for the quarter will be calculated on the basis of the following course requirements:

- Class attendance and participation: 15%
- Critical summary of one day’s readings: 15%
- Paper topic, partial bibliography, office hours visit: 5%
- In-class midterm: 20%
- Outline of research paper: 5%
- Short oral presentation based on research paper: 5%
- PowerPoint accompanying oral presentation: 5%
- Research paper: 30%

A number of the assignments, including the submission of the paper topic and the outline, are intended to encourage you to move forward with the final paper in a timely way and—importantly—to give me the chance to weigh in with suggestions and feedback. The short oral presentation has the same function, but it also allows each student in the seminar to learn a bit about what everyone else is working on.

Here are the details:

1. **Class attendance and participation (15%)**: This is a seminar, and your participation is expected.

2. **A critical summary** (3-4 pages, typed, double-spaced, with standard fonts and margins) of both of the readings assigned for one of the following class meetings: October 4, 9, or 11 (15%). Please choose the session you prefer and submit the summary as a Word document using the inbox set up for that purpose on Canvas under “Assignments.” Your summary must be submitted at least 24 hours before that class meeting (that is, by 3:30 pm on the day before).

Your summary should address both of the readings for that class meeting (devoting more or less equal space to each), carefully summarizing the main arguments and discussing the readings critically in relation to the themes of the course. Try to bring the readings into conversation with one another, rather than discussing each one totally separately. These summaries should be written out in full paragraphs; they should not take the form of a list or bullet points. Please proofread carefully and pay close attention to matters of style, syntax, and organization. (If your paper has a lot of careless errors and does not seem to have been proofread adequately, I will ask you to re-do it.) You do not need to provide a reference list, but quotes and paraphrases should be followed by in-text citations placed inside parentheses—for example, “(Kahn, 117).”

I will grade your critical summary directly on Canvas, and a marked-up and graded version will be made available to you through Canvas.

**Note**: Because writing the critical summary should prepare you well for the seminar discussion, I will look to the people who wrote summaries to take the lead in participating in the discussion that day.
3. **Paper topic and partial bibliography, plus office hours visit (5%)**: By **noon on Monday, October 15**, please submit a 1-2 paragraph description of your paper topic, along with a partial and provisional bibliography (at least 5 sources), as a Word document using the inbox set up for that purpose on Canvas under “Assignments.”

If your paper will be thematically similar to, or will have any overlap in actual content with, any other paper you have written in the past or are writing this quarter, please also provide a clear description of the overlap as well as an explanation of how your paper for this class will differ.

**In addition, you are required to come to my office hours no later than October 18** (near the end of Week 4) to discuss your paper topic with me in person. I will hold extra office hours that week.

4. **An in-class midterm on Thursday, November 1 (20%)**: On the midterm, I will ask you to provide identifications and explanations of specific terms and concepts that have been covered in readings and seminar discussions. Further details will be provided closer to the date.

5. **An outline of your research paper (5%)**: By **noon on Monday, November 12**, please submit an outline as a Word document using the inbox set up for that purpose on Canvas under “Assignments.” The outline doesn’t have to be fancy or highly detailed, but it should clearly convey the main sections and topics of your paper. A simple way to structure it would be to create a numbered list of the main sections of the paper and then, for each section, add a sentence or two explaining what you will be doing in that section.

Of course, if you prefer to submit a more detailed outline that breaks each section down into sub-sections (and sub-sub-sections), that would be welcome, but it’s not required.

6. At our class meetings in Week 10 (November 27 and 29), each of you will deliver a short **oral presentation (using PowerPoint)** briefly describing your research paper (10%). **Your PowerPoint file must be submitted on Canvas in the inbox set up for that purpose by 9:00 am on Tuesday, November 27.** (You do not need to submit a text for the oral presentation.) You will be graded on the quality and clarity of the oral presentation as well as the quality and clarity of the PowerPoint (5% each).

I will provide details about the length of your presentation. (Please use a timer or stopwatch to keep track of the time.) In your presentation, you should identify the topic of your paper, present your research question in relation to the topic, give an explanation of what you did to research it, and tell us your preliminary findings. If there is anything you would like feedback on or suggestions from the group about, please also say so.

The PowerPoint should include both text and images. Please make sure slides are readable from a distance. It can be useful to include an “Overview” slide near the beginning to outline where you will be going.

7. **A research paper (10 pages or so, not including references), due by 9 am on Monday, December 10 (30%)**: Please submit your paper as a Word document using the inbox set up for that purpose on Canvas under “Assignments.”
Your paper should investigate a specific research topic of your choice related to the themes of the course. It must draw on course materials but must also extend beyond course readings. The paper should be in essay format and should state and prove an identifiable central argument. Please proofread carefully and pay close attention to matters of style, syntax, and organization. (If your paper has a lot of careless errors and does not seem to have been proofread adequately, I will not accept it.)

Your paper should include a title and should be broken into sections with headings. Use parenthetical citations for quotes and references to other texts. List all such texts in your bibliography. (You may use any standard bibliographic style, as long as you are consistent.) Please use a standard font and a ragged right margin (rather than right justification).
Course Mechanics:

Please read the following bulleted items carefully. Along with providing basic information, this section also serves as fair warning of my classroom policies and expectations:

♦ This course will make use of the Canvas course management system. The direct link for this course is https://canvas.northwestern.edu/courses/79689. Students are responsible for logging in, checking regularly for posted announcements, and obtaining readings and assignments from the site.

♦ Important course announcements may also be sent to students’ registered campus email addresses. You are responsible for monitoring those email accounts.

♦ Unless you are directed to do so by me, please do not use Canvas to send broadcast announcements to the rest of the class. If you have material that you think should be shared, please ask me to distribute it.

♦ You are welcome to sign up to see me during my office hours using this link: https://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/gfkai. Please do try to sign up well in advance, because if no one has signed up for a slot I may be elsewhere. Also, please note that my office is on the second floor of a building without an elevator. Any student for whom stairs pose difficulties may email me to make an appointment to meet elsewhere.

♦ This syllabus and schedule are subject to change in the event of unforeseen circumstances. Announcements of changes will be posted on Canvas and emailed to students.

♦ There is one book assigned for this course:


The book is available for purchase from the Norris Center Bookstore. Copies have also been placed on reserve at the main library.

♦ All other course readings are available for download from the Canvas site in the form of PDFs. Please bring readings with you to class, either as printouts or on your laptops or tablets. Note that some PDFs appear sideways when viewed in Adobe Acrobat. They will print fine as is, but to read them on screen, select “Rotate View” from the “View” menu.

♦ Over the course of the quarter, your grades will become accessible to you on Canvas. Please let me know immediately if there are any recording errors.

Your grades on Canvas will take the form of numerical scores (not percentages, even if Canvas displays a percent sign). For each assignment, you can convert your numerical score to a letter grade equivalent by using the following key:
Your **overall course grade** will be calculated simply by multiplying each score by its respective weight (for example, 0.2 for the midterm), summing up the results, rounding up or down to the _nearest_ whole number, and then converting to the letter grade equivalent.

♦ Students are responsible for all material presented in the readings, films and video clips, and class discussions. **Class attendance** is required. While I will post my PowerPoints on Canvas after class, these are not intended to be comprehensive, and often they will not make complete sense by themselves. Students are expected to attend class in order to learn the course material.

♦ I also fully expect that students will be not just physically present in the classroom but also mentally present (that is, conscious and not otherwise occupied—even intermittently—with email, texting, social media, computer games, shopping, or other online activities).

You may bring **technology** to the seminar room as long as you can handle it responsibly and respectfully. Laptops and tablets should be used for note-taking or other class-related purposes only. I also urge you to consider the growing body of evidence that students do better when they take notes by hand (because the act of writing forces them to think about the ideas) and that the distracting effects of technology interfere with long-term retention of information. (See [https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/07/27/class-cellphone-and-laptop-use-lowers-exam-scores-new-study-shows](https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/07/27/class-cellphone-and-laptop-use-lowers-exam-scores-new-study-shows).)

♦ Class will be conducted as a seminar, not as a lecture course. I will typically begin with some framing comments and background information, and then I will facilitate a discussion. Come to class having _already read_ the readings for that day (bring them with you), and be prepared to **participate**! Please do ask questions and offer opinions! Disagreement with the instructor or fellow students is fine, as long as you are polite and patient in how you go about it.

♦ Except under unusual circumstances, **late assignments** will be marked down. Late final papers may not even be accepted at all, if they arrive too late for me to grade them.

Please note that there is no excuse for failing to keep **electronic backups** of your data (for example, on flash drives, external hard drives, “cloud” storage sites, or other computers) in case your primary computer fails or your hard drive crashes.

♦ All written work for the course must be **typed, double-spaced**, using standard fonts and 1-inch margins on all sides.
Any student requesting accommodations related to a disability or other condition is required to register with AccessibleNU (http://www.northwestern.edu/accessiblenu/) and provide me with an accommodation notification from that office, preferably within the first two weeks of class. All information will remain confidential.

Any course that includes the themes of sexuality, gender, and race may contain material that will startle or even upset some students. Please keep this possibility in mind and be forewarned.

I am committed to strict enforcement of university regulations concerning academic integrity, which means I report ALL suspected violations of the policy (including suspicion of cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, obtaining an unfair advantage, and aiding and abetting dishonesty) to the Assistant Dean for Advising and Academic Integrity, who then carries out a formal investigation. Please take the time to familiarize yourself with the university’s policy on academic integrity (see http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/index.html).

Examples of plagiarism include but are not limited to: directly copying work written by another person without an appropriate citation; modifying a few words written by someone else, but otherwise presenting another person’s ideas as if they were your own without appropriate citations; and using information from the internet without appropriate citation even if that information has no identifiable author (such as information from a Wikipedia page). In addition, while I encourage students to collaborate when studying or learning course material, it should be clear that no collaboration is permitted on written work or exams, and any collaboration in those cases constitutes academic dishonesty.

If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or academic dishonesty, please ask me! Confirmed violations of academic integrity will result in both an administrative penalty and an academic penalty. The administrative penalty, assigned by university officials, typically is suspension for one quarter; any such suspension becomes part of your record, which is made available on request to potential employers and graduate school admissions committees. The academic penalty is assigned by the instructor, and my own policy in almost every case is to assign a failing grade FOR THE ENTIRE COURSE.

This course makes use of Turnitin, a software product that compares your work against other texts in its database in order to safeguard academic integrity. Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the Usage Policy posted on the Turnitin.com site. Please contact me if you have any questions about Turnitin.

Please be respectful of those around you. At the beginning of class, make sure your cell phone is turned off or set to vibrate. And please don’t chat with other students during
class. In addition, arriving late, leaving early, and walking in and out of class are distracting to those around you. Obviously they are sometimes unavoidable. But I’d appreciate your keeping them to a minimum.

♦ This syllabus and all PowerPoint presentations for this course are copyright 2018 by Steven Epstein. Please do not post any materials related to the course on the internet without the permission of the instructor. This includes sites such as “Course Hero.” Students are also prohibited from selling (or being paid for taking) notes during this course to or by any person or commercial firm without the express written permission of Professor Epstein. No audio or video recordings of class are permitted without the instructor’s permission.
**Schedule of Readings and Assignments:**

**WEEK 1**

**THU, SEP 27: INTRODUCTION**


**WEEK 2**

**TUE, OCT 2: THEORETICAL BACKDROP: CO-PRODUCTION AND LOOPING EFFECTS**


**REMINDER:** You must turn in a critical summary of the readings for one of the next three classes (by 3:30 pm on the day before that class).

**THU, OCT 4: THE SEXING AND GENDERING OF SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE**


**WEEK 3**

**TUE, OCT 9: SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND RACIALIZATION**

THU, OCT 11: SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND RACIALIZATION (CONT.): THE CASE OF GENETIC ANCESTRY TESTING


**REMINDER:** Your paper topics are due at noon on Monday, October 15. You must also meet with me during my office hours by no later than Thursday, October 18 to discuss your paper topic with me in person, so please sign up.

WEEK 4

TUE, OCT 16: CATEGORICAL POLITICS IN MEDICINE AND SOCIETY

**Video in class:** “Resisterectomy,” by Chase Joynt (2012)


THU, OCT 18: NATURE, CULTURE, AND SEXUAL IDENTITIES

**Film clip in class:** Excerpt from “Twilight of the Golds,” by Ross Marks (1996).


**WEEK 5**

**TUE, OCT 23: RECONSTRUCTING KINSHIP: GENDER, RACE, SEXUALITY, AND THE TECHNO-ECONOMICS OF REPRODUCTION**


**THU, OCT 25: SEXUAL MEDICINE**


**WEEK 6**

**TUE, OCT 30: MEDICINE CONFRONTS SEXUALITY**


**THU, NOV 1: ** **IN-CLASS MIDTERM ** **

**WEEK 7**

**TUE, NOV 6: THE GENDERING AND SEXUALIZING OF TECHNOLOGIES, AND THE TECHNOLOGICAL PRODUCTION OF SEXUALITY**


**THU, NOV 8: ACTIVISM AND THE POLITICS OF DIFFERENCE**


**REMINDER:** Your outline of your paper is due by noon on Monday, Nov. 12.

**WEEK 8**

**TUE, NOV 13: BIOMEDICAL INCLUSION AND DIFFERENCE: RACE AND GENDER IN RESEARCH**


**THU, NOV 15: BIOMEDICAL INCLUSION AND DIFFERENCE (CONT.)**

Epstein, *Inclusion*, 74-134 (Chapters 4-6)

**WEEK 9**

**TUE, NOV 20: BIOMEDICAL INCLUSION AND DIFFERENCE (CONT.)**


**THU, NOV 22: THANKSGIVING BREAK – NO CLASS**

**WEEK 10**
**REMINDER:** Your **PowerPoint file** for your oral presentations is due by 9 am on Tuesday, Nov. 27.

**TUE, NOV 27: STUDENT PRESENTATIONS**

**THU, NOV 29: STUDENT PRESENTATIONS**

**REMINDER:** Your **research paper** is due on Canvas by 9 am on Monday, December 10.