EEEBW4321
HUMAN NATURE: DNA, RACE & IDENTITY:
OUR BODIES, OUR SELVES?
Fall 2014
Wednesdays, 2:10-4pm
Philosophy Hall Room 507
Faculty:
Marya Pollack, MD MPH, Assistant Clinical Professor of Psychiatry
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Robert Pollack, PhD, Professor of Biology
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Guest Faculty Lecturers:
Dean Marcia Sells, JD (School of the Arts)
Pilar Jennings, PhD (Union Theological Seminary)

Description of the course:
This 4 point seminar on Human Identity is taught from the perspective of four different disciplines; Law, Religion, Science, and Medicine. EEEB W4321 Human Nature fulfills requirements for majors in the Department of Ecology, Evolution and Environmental Biology and in the new major of Medicine, Literature, and Society (MLS) offered by the Institute in Comparative Literature. It is also available for the major and concentration in Sustainable Development offered by the Earth Institute and cross-listed with the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race. In addition, it counts as an elective for students in Biology, Engineering, and Bioethics.

The course focuses on human identity, beginning with the individual over the lifespan and progressing to communal and global viewpoints using a framework of perspectives from biology, genetics, medicine, public health, psychiatry, religion and the law. W4321 evolved from a Columbia College Core Capstone course INSM4321 in 2009 which developed initially from a Ford Foundation grant to the Center for the Study of Science and Religion for “A Difficult Dialogues Course: ‘Human Nature.’”

As a graduate level course, it is open to interested undergraduates and graduate students including those from the Medical Center campus.

Columbia University is dedicated to facilitating equal access for students with disabilities. Please let one of the instructors know in advance through the Office of Disability Services if you need special accommodations because of a disability.
Format:
Each class will usually be a presentation by students of the readings, and a discussion led by the instructors, with ample opportunity for the whole class to participate in an open and non-judgmental discourse of the topic at hand. Laptops are to be kept closed during class unless prior arrangements are made for a special accommodation. Please keep all cell phones on vibrate. A 5-10 minute break will be held after the first hour. Please notify the instructors in advance if you must miss a class.

Grading will be based on class participation (20%); grades from two short 5 page response papers during the semester based on assigned readings (20% each, 40% total); and a final paper of 8-10 pages due at the end of the term (40%). All papers are expected to be handed in on time.

Format for Response Papers:
Students will be asked to write two short papers (double spaced, 12 point font) during the course of the semester. Each paper should respond to a specific article, or set of articles relating to one subject, that appears on the reading list. References should be made within the paper; eg. (Johnson, 45). Papers must begin with a thesis statement which the rest of the paper will illustrate, develop, or demonstrate on the basis of the texts.

Example of a thesis statement: People who suffer physical and/or mental disabilities are due the same respect, consideration, and civil rights as fully abled individuals.

The first paper is due 10/8.
The second paper is due 11/12.

Format for Final Papers:
Final papers of the semester should reflect a more in depth perspective of the topics covered in class. For this paper we ask you to describe how the class has changed you. The final paper is due 12/10. No late papers please.

Please note recommended books on reserve are located in Butler Library, and that additional web sites and optional multidisciplinary events are found on the New Courseworks website.
Schedule of Classes:

   
   Introduction and Overview of the Course: Self Identification
   
   Assigned Reading:
   
   
   

   
   Assigned Readings:
   
   
   **Darwin, C.** “On the Origin of the Species,” Chapter 14
   
   
   

   Illustrations:
   
   A Series of Embryos of Different Vertebrates (From Romanes, adapted from Haeckel)
   
   Overview of the Admissibility of Marriage Between Aryans and Non-Aryans (Zeitschrift fur Arztliche Fortbildung, 33 (1936).

   Recommended Readings:
   
   
   
   (on reserve)

3. Artificial Reproductive Technologies & Adoption: Are You My Mother/Father? - 9/17
   
   Assigned Readings:
   
   **Chavkin, W.,** “Fertility Decline and the Empowerment of Women.”
   
   
   

Recommended Readings:


Assigned Readings:

Henrietta Lacks:

Recommended Readings:
Genetic Information Non-discrimination Act of 2008. (GINA)
Glossary of Genomics Terms, JAMA 10 Apr 2013.

5. Phenotype vs. Genotype: Am I My DNA? -10/1

Assigned Readings:

Recommended Readings:

6. Disease vs. Illness: Am I My Diagnosis? -10/8
(First Paper Due)

Assigned Readings:
Rabin, R.C., In Israel, a Push to Screen for Cancer Gene Leaves Many Conflicted,” NYT: 26 Nov 2013

Illustrations:

Recommended Readings:

7. Microbiome Interdependency: Am I What I Eat? -10/15
Assigned Readings:

Recommended Readings:

8. Doctor-Patient Interdependency-10/22
Assigned Readings:

Patients' Bill of Rights, Public Health Law (PHL) 2803 (1)(g) Patient's Rights, 10NYCRR, 405.7, 405.7(a)(1), 405.7(c).

9. De-humanizing: Do I Have a Right Over My Body? -10/29
Marcia Sells, Guest Lecturer

Assigned Readings:
Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Articles, 19, 20 and 27.

Recommended Website:
PillowAngel.org, (blog by Ashley's parents)


Assigned Readings:
Spector, M., "Partial Recall-Can neuroscience help us rewrite our most traumatic memories?"
The New Yorker, 19 May 2014.

Recommended Website:

Recommended Readings:
Illustrations:

Personal Stories:

11. Neuroscience: Can My Mind Be Read? -11/12
(Second Paper Due)
Marcia Sells, Guest Lecturer

Assigned Readings:

Recommended Readings:

Recommended Websites:
Encyclopaedia Britannica, Criminal Law and Mens Rea
The MacArthur Foundation Research Network on Neuroscience and Law
Innocence Project.org, Unreliable or Improper Forensic Science
Wired.co.uk, “The Brain Police: Judging Murder with an MRI”

12. Infant Interdependency-11/19
Pilar Jennings, Guest Lecturer
Assigned Readings:

Recommended Readings:

Assigned Readings:
Wilson, E.O., "Beware the Age of Loneliness," The Economist, 18 Nov 2013.

14. University Interdependency-12/3
Pilar Jennings, Guest Lecturer
Assigned Readings: