EEEBGU4321
HUMAN NATURE: DNA, RACE & IDENTITY:
OUR BODIES, OUR SELVES?
Spring 2018
Wednesdays, 2:10-4pm
Room Hamilton Hall 607

Faculty:
Marya Pollack, MD MPH, Assistant Clinical Professor of Psychiatry
mp23@cume.columbia.edu

Robert Pollack, PhD, Professor of Biology
pollack@columbia.edu

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 GU4321 Human Nature: DNA, Race & Identity fulfills requirements for majors in the Department of EEEB, Biology, Medicine, Literature, and Society; offered by the Institute in Comparative Literature and the major and concentration in Sustainable Development offered by the Earth Institute. It is cross-listed with the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race and The Center for Science and Society. In addition, it counts as an elective for students in Biology, Engineering, and Bioethics. The seminar is also part of a four-week elective for fourth year medical students at Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons during the months of February and October.

The course focuses on human identity, covering the individual over the lifespan and expanding to communal and global viewpoints using a framework of perspectives from biology, genetics, medicine, public health, psychiatry, religion and the law. GU4321 evolved from a Columbia College Core Capstone course INSM4321 in 2009 which in turn developed initially from a Ford Foundation grant.

*Please note recommended books on reserve are in Butler Library, and that additional web sites and optional multidisciplinary events are found on the Canvas website.

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 facilitated 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 (5 pages, double spaced, 12 point font) during the
course of the semester. For each paper students 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;
e.g. (Johnson, 45).

The first paper is due 2/14/18.
The second paper is due 3/28/18.

Format for Final Papers:
Final papers of the semester (10 pages, double spaced, 12 point font) should reflect a more in depth
perspective of the topics covered in class and in addition, we ask you to describe how the class has
changed some aspect of how you identify yourself. The final paper is due 5/4/18. *(2/28/18 for
medical students only)

Fourth Year Medical Students:
Please refer to the Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons’ Elective
Catalog at https://oasis.cumc.columbia.edu. The course is currently listed under NYPH: MD28P,
with a link to the course description and format and is offered every February and October. Please
also refer to the Canvas site for further information or email the Director, Dr. Marya Pollack at
mp23@cumc.columbia.edu. Medical students should attend the first class if possible and are invited
to come to any additional class after they complete the elective as their schedule permits.

*Prior to each class, students email the professors their choice of paper/s they wish to present by Sunday night the week before the next class. Please come to each class having done all the required readings in preparation for small group discussion.
Schedule of Classes:

   - Introduction and Overview of the Course: Self Identification
   - Assigned Readings:

   - Recommended Readings:

   - Assigned Readings:

3. Phenotype vs. Genotype: Am I My DNA? - 1/31
   - Assigned Readings:
Marx, P., “About Face: Why is South Korea the world’s plastic-surgery capital?” The New Yorker, 23 Mar 2015.


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:


4. Doctor-Patient Interdependency-2/7

Assigned Readings:
Aronson, A., ““Good” Patients and “Difficult” Patients, Rethinking Our Definitions,” NEJM 369;9, 29 Aug 2013.


5. Disease vs. Illness: *Am I My Diagnosis?* -2/14

(First Paper Due)

Assigned Readings:


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


Recommended Readings:


6. Epigenetic Interdependency-2/21

Assigned Readings:


7. Artificial Reproductive Technologies & Adoption: *Are You My Mother/Father?* -2/28

Assigned Readings:


Chavkin, W., “Fertility Decline and the Empowerment of Women.”


http://nyti.ms/2elEjQv


Recommended Readings:


Assigned Readings:


Recommended Readings:


Assigned Readings:

Recommended Readings:

Recommended Personal Stories:

(Second Paper Due)

Assigned Readings:
Henrietta Lacks:

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

Assigned Readings:

Recommended Readings:

12. De-humanizing: Do I Have a Right Over My Body?-4/11
Assigned Readings:
Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Articles, 19, 20 and 27.

Recommended Websites:
PillowAngel.org, (blog by Ashley’s parents)

Assigned Readings:
NOAA, Draft on Climate Change excerpt, 2017.
Wilson, E.O., "Beware the Age of Loneliness," The Economist, 18 Nov 2013.

Recommended Readings:

Dr. Pilar Jennings, Guest Lecturer
Assigned Readings: