Honors 3053.21838: “Biology, Race, & Gender”  
Spring, 2019

Instructor: Doren Recker  
doren.recker@okstate.edu  
Office Hours: Tues. 11:30-12:15; and by Appt.

Texts: Course Packet (available from bookstore); Stephen Crane: Maggie a Girl of the Street (get your own version); Occasional Handouts and Readings placed on D2L, to supplement assigned Readings.

Description: This course critically investigates ways in which the relationship(s) between biological theory and social and ethical issues have overlapped (and/or been confused) over the past two centuries in both scientific and medical contexts, as well as in popular culture (including literature, art, advertisements, etc.). (1) The first part of the course investigates Concepts and Data relevant to the critical analysis of Cultural and especially Race & Gender issues, and develops approaches and styles of questioning employed throughout the semester. (2) The second part of the course traces the development of Darwinian evolution during the latter 19th century as it was applied to human beings (‘Social Darwinism’), and how controversies concerning biological approaches to explaining human behavior (especially racial and gender issues) entered this discussion. (3) The third part of the course analyzes the uses of biological and medical work to justify racist and sexist ideas and policies (particularly in the United States) in the late 19th century → WWII. (4) The fourth part of the course investigates the recent resurrection of attempts to apply Darwinian evolution and other biological approaches to human behavior (Evolutionary Psychology; recent IQ controversies), particularly in the United States, and the relationship (if any) between these new theories and the racist and sexist uses of Darwinian evolution discussed in the second and third sections.

Ultimately, students will be exposed to a wide range of materials concerning views on the alleged biological aspects of perceived racial and gender differences, how these views were implemented socially, legally, and medically in the United States and elsewhere in the late 19th and early-mid 20th centuries. Literary and ‘Pop Culture’ sources are examined, as well as historical, philosophical, psychological, and scientific material. This information will then be used to carefully analyze historical and current claims concerning race and gender relations, and to help frame current discussions in terms of broader historical and conceptual perspectives.

Requirements: This is an upper-level course, and it is assumed that students will come to class prepared to discuss the assignments, and to be engaged in these discussions. Also, work is expected to be proof-read, and ‘clean’ of typos and grammatical problems before it is submitted. Each of the four sections will be followed by a 5-6 pp. paper (assigned papers) on the student’s choice of specific topics, covering major currents within the areas discussed in that section. The student will be given 1 week to complete these papers after the topic choices have been distributed. (Exam 1 = 75 pts.; Exams 2 and 3 = 100 pts; Exam 4 = 125 pts... 400 pts). An additional exploration-paper (also 5 - 6 pp.) on a mutually agreed upon topic relevant to the course is due shortly
before the end of the semester (125 pts). 25 pts will be available for Attendance: 0 unexcused absences = 25 pts; 1 unexcused absence = 20 pts.; 2 unexcused absences = 15 pts.; 3 Unexcused absences = 10 pts. Total Available Points = 550.

A = 90 – 100; B = 80 – 89; C = 70 – 79; etc. Borderline cases (a percentage pt. or so lower than next higher grade—e.g., 89%; 78.5%) will decided in terms of (a) attendance (no more than 3 unexcused absences); and (b) steady improvement in scores on assignments.

A grading rubric will be distributed, and detailed feedback will be provided for each paper, as well as on the paper topic proposals.

**Dates:**

- a) Exam # 1 Distributed (2/15)  **Due** (2/22)
- b) *Exploration Paper Topics*  **Due** (3/1)
- c) Exam # 2 Distributed (3/11)  **Due** (3/25)
- d) Exam # 3 Distributed (4/10)  **Due** (4/17)
- e) *Exploration Paper*  **Due** (4/26)
- f) Exam # 4 Distributed (5/3)  **Due** (5/10)

Academic Integrity: See University Policy (Check Website). Academic integrity is essential in a community of scholars, and violations will not be tolerated. I will ask for maximum sanctions should you find yourself on the wrong side of such issues …YOU HAVE BEEN WarnED!!!

*Have a Good Semester!*