Politics of the Body

TR 2-3:50pm   PS 100   Spring 2015

Professor Priscilla Yamin
pyamin@uoregon.edu
Office: PLC 924
Office hours: TBA

GTF – TBA

Course Description:
Today there is rapidly growing use of scientific research and “the body” to explain and justify difference and inequalities in the United States. The assumption is - if it is based on a scientific study or research, it must be true. We are not all trained as scientists however. This introductory interdisciplinary course will introduce students to the scientific and biological explanations of poverty and social inequality in the US historically and today. It will explore the various ways that “difference” has been constructed as a biological category within various academic disciplines including history, political science, and anthropology. The course will investigate the biological strand within American ideology and public policy about poverty, women’s rights, gay rights and civil rights. We will begin with early 20th century ideas about social Darwinism, eugenics, immigration restriction, and the advent of IQ testing to contemporary explanations based in genetics, neuroscience and epigenetics. This course will give students the tools and historical context to understand and analyze the political use of science.

PS 100 is a General Education (GE) course that will satisfy both the social science and multicultural requirement. It is intended primarily for 1st and 2nd year students. As a GE course, it exposes students to the broad idea of inequality in the US but specifically as it is shaped by notions of science, biology and genetics. It will encourage students to think critically about how science is used in politics, the media and popular culture to define groups of people labeled by race, gender, sexuality, nationality, and class among others. It will do so by exploring the tension between nature (basing difference and inequality on scientific and biological conceptions) and nurture (basing difference and inequality on culture, and societal ideologies). By exploring different modes of inquiry among scholars working on inequality, this course will encourage students to develop critical thinking skills and integrate knowledge across different fields of scholarly study.

Justice, Inequality and Difference GE Cluster: PS 100 is linked to a series of other GE courses examining social, economic and political inequality in the US. Many of
the resources we will use in the class will be accessed through the cluster website, and we encourage you to consider taking other courses in the cluster.

**Expected Learning Outcomes:**
The expected learning outcomes for this course are that student will be able to:

1) Critically engage information about major political concepts such as justice, equality and inequality based on notions of science, biology and culture in the United States. In others words understand there are different ways to look at any one problem.

2) Ask questions about how we understand inequality and what we take for granted as the way people are.

3) Identify, describe and define basic factual information and analytical concepts concerning the US political system and culture

4) Use arguments and evidence to effectively communicate an analysis of political phenomenon.

**Required Readings**
There is no textbook in this class. The readings for the course will be posted on Blackboard, except one book to purchase: *Fatal Invention: How Science, Politics, and Big Business Re-create Race in the Twenty-First Century*, by Dorothy Roberts, The New Press, 2011.

**Course Requirements**
Class will be a mixture of lecture, small group work and discussion sections. In order to be successful in the course, student are expected to attend class, complete all readings prior to class meeting and be prepared to engage with the material, and complete all assignments. Grades will be assessed on the following:

- **Attend Class and Read:** 10% (30 hours class time and 60 hours of reading expected)
- **Weekly quizzes and class discussion:** 20% (5 hours expected)
- **Writing Assignment 1 Due Week 4:** 25% (10 hours expected)
- **Writing Assignment 2 due week 8:** 25% (10 hours expected)
- **Presentation:** 20%, last week of classes (10 hours expected)

There will be no final exam in this course.

- **Quizzes:** will test students on reading and concepts each week. They will occur on Thurs and will be multiple choice and short answers. (10 hours a week for reading and quiz preparation.)

- **Detailed instructions for the written assignments will be provided.** One assignment will be a critical analysis of an artifact (article, image or video). (20 hours for both written assignments)

- **Presentation:** During the last week of class each student will give a 10-minute presentation on an expression science and inequality taken from news, popular
culture, literature, and movies to the class that represents the themes discussed in class. (10 hours of preparation)

Class links – post examples of science and inequality on the course blackboard site that you come across in the news, online, magazines. We will discuss in class. (5 hours per term)

**Grading Rubric:**
All quizzes, and assignments will be graded on the following rubric:

A: means the student has completed advanced and exceptional performance on all course objectives.
B: means the student has completed proficient work on all course objectives.
C: means the student has completed proficient work on the most important objectives, although not all objectives.
D: means the student has completed proficient work on at least one-half of the course objectives but is missing some important objectives.
F: means the student has completed proficient work on fewer than one-half of the course objectives.

**Class Policies:**

**Attendance** will be taken at the beginning of class. You are allowed 1 excused absence without penalty. Further absence will be penalized except in case of illness. All excused absences must be documented by a doctor’s notes or any other relevant notes.

**Class Conduct** We are all accountable to create a climate of mutual respect in the classroom. While differences of opinion and perspective are vital and will be encouraged, common courtesy as well as University policy prohibit personal attacks and discriminatory conduct. Please see professor or GTF for any reason.

**Email correspondence** Please identify yourself and the name of our course in all correspondence with the instructor and GTF. Also, when you email, please be aware that you should write grammatically. That is not to say that emails could affect your grade, but you should act professionally in this medium like in all communication. Do not expect an immediate response to your email—it is not appropriate to ask a question about an exam on the night before it is to be taken.

**Late assignment policy** Except in cases of serious illness or other emergency, late assignments will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade per day of lateness, e.g. an A-paper two days late becomes a B.

**Re-grading policy** You may request the re-grading of an assignment or exam. Students who wish to have their work re-graded must following these steps: 1. Student must wait at least 24 hours after receiving the grade. 2. Student must read
through the assignment thoroughly before requesting a re-grade. 3. Student must fill out a re-grading form and provide a written statement of why he or she would like the exam re-graded, which will be turned in with the original exam within ONE week of receiving the grade. 4. The grade may be raised, lowered, or left the same.

**Academic dishonesty and plagiarism** All work in this course must be your own and produced exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly acknowledged and documented. For the consequences of academic dishonesty, refer to the Schedule of Classes published quarterly. Violations will be taken seriously and are noted on student disciplinary records. If you are in doubt regarding the requirements, please consult with the instructor before you complete any requirement of the course. Please review the University’s policies at: [http://studentlife.uoregon.edu/judicial/conduct/sai.htm](http://studentlife.uoregon.edu/judicial/conduct/sai.htm)

**Disability services** If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to meet with me soon. Please bring a notification letter from Disability Services outlining your approved accommodations. For information on Disability Services, go to [http://ds.uoregon.edu/DS_home.html](http://ds.uoregon.edu/DS_home.html)

**Lecture and readings schedule:**

**Week 1: Introduction**

**Tues., Mar 31:** Defining the politics of the body

**Thurs., Apr 2:** Today’s notions of inequality and instability

**Week 2: Historical notions of the body**

**Tues., Apr 7:** Biological notions of sex

**Thurs., Apr 9:** Biological notions of race

**Week 3: Eugenics in the US**

**Tues., Apr 14:** Introducing Racial Science
Readings: Dorothy Roberts, “The Invention of Race” (p 3-25) and “Separating Racial Science from Racism,” (p 26-54) in Fatal Invention.

**Thurs., Apr 16:** History of Eugenics
“Evolution, “Progress,” and Eugenics,” in Race and Membership, p 62-82

**Week 4: Reproduction**

DUE: WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1

**Tues., Apr 21:** Birth Control

**Thurs., Apr 23:** Sterilization policy and eugenics in Oregon
Reading: Hansen and King, Sterilized by the State, p 3-27, 72-117, 263-275

**Week 5: Culture of Poverty? Nature v Nurture**

**Tues, Apr 28:** Culture of poverty

**Thurs, Apr 30:** The “Bell Curve” debate
Readings: Murray and Herrenstein, The Bell Curve, Chap 1; Fischer, et al., Inequality by Design, p 3-70.

**Week 6: Inequality and Poverty**

**Tues., May 5:** The undeserving poor

**Thurs., May 7:** Poverty policy

**Week 7: The New Racial Science**

**Tues., May 12:** Race in genetic terms
Reading: Dorothy Roberts, Chaps 3-6, in Fatal Inventions, p 55-123.

**Thurs., May 14:** Race and Medicine
Readings: Roberts, Chap 7-10, in Fatal Inventions, p 147-226.
**Week 8: Neuroscience and Epigenetics**

DUE: WRITING ASSIGNMENT #2

**Tues., May 19:** What is epigenetics?  

**Thurs., May 21:** Policy implications  

**Week 9: Critiques and Questions**

**Tues., May 26:** Skin color?  

**Thurs., May 28:** The gay gene? The political gene?  

**Week 10: Presentations and wrap-up**

**Tues., June 2:**

**Thurs., June 4:**