

PHIL230: GENDER, RACE, AND SCIENCE

FALL 2021

Class schedule: TR 1:00-2:20pm
Class Instructor: Katherine Valde
Office: DB 206

Class Location: DB 101
E-mail: valdekg@wofford.edu
Office Hours: W 11:00am-1:00 pm

Few tragedies can be more extensive than the stunting of life, few injustices deeper than the denial of an opportunity to strive or even to hope, by a limit imposed from without, but falsely identified as lying within.

-Stephan Jay Gould (*The Mismeasure of Man*)

Course Description:

This course is an examination of issues arising at the intersection of feminist philosophy, philosophy of race, and the history and philosophy of science. The primary goal of this course is to come to a deeper and more critically reflective understanding of both the history of the concepts of race and gender and the various roles that these concepts continue to play in contemporary science.

The first section of the course examines gender and race as scientific categories. We will place these debates in their historical context, as we examine the role that understandings of race and gender played the development of Western science. Next, we will investigate the relationship between biological determinism and social inequality, particularly in the fields of genetics and health disparities research. How has science, both historically and continually, contributed to social inequality? The course ends with an examination of the relationship among race, gender, and contemporary scientific research. We will consider how our cultural understandings of race and gender help co-construct scientific knowledge.

Course Objectives:

This course is designed to both introduce some questions about the concepts of gender and race, and their relationship to science, and to inspire your curiosity for such questions. You will learn to:

- Critically evaluate claims about the biology of race and gender
- Identify and understand assumptions about gender and race in science
- Analyze the significance of biological determinism in debates about social inequality
- Interpret and analyze philosophical text
- Reflect critically on scientific practice
- Demonstrate an awareness of ethnic/racial inequities in American society

It is the ultimate goal of this course to help you become a thoughtful consumer of information and participant in our society.

Required Text:

All readings/videos/podcasts will be provided via Moodle.

Class Expectations:

Do the readings. *Think* about the readings. Our class will not be engaging for you if you do not come to class prepared. Treat each other and the instructor with respect. Be prepared to be challenged. Some of the readings will be difficult, and you may have more questions than clarity. That's ok!

Grading:

ENGAGEMENT – 20%

Engagement comes in many forms (not just attendance). This includes (but is not limited to):

Preparation – reviewing materials and readings before class, eating, sleeping, etc.

Focus – avoiding distractions during class meetings

Presence – engaged and responsive during group activities

Asking questions – in class and out of class

Listening – hearing what other say, and also what they aren't saying

Specificity – referring to specific ideas from readings and discussions

Synthesizing – making connections between readings and discussions

Merely showing up and listening respectfully is considered C-level (70%) engagement.

CURRENT ISSUES JOURNAL– 10%

Students will be asked to make a minimum of 3 journal entries that connect course material to news events. Journal entries must reference a specific source, summarize that source, and discuss the principles, ideas, or concepts from our course that the source or event reflects. Students will also be asked to share something from their journal in class at the end of the semester. Further guidelines will be provided in class.

SHORT PAPERS– 40%

Students will complete two short papers for this class (worth 20% each). Short papers will be approximately 750 words. Further guidelines for the construction of good academic papers will be provided in class.

TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAM – 30%

This comprehensive take-home exam will consist of short answer and long answer questions designed to check students' comprehension of key ideas from this course.

Course Schedule:

UNIT 1: THE SCIENCE OF RACE AND SEX (WEEKS 1-5)

Week 1 – Welcome

Thursday 9/1 Welcome to Gender, Race, and Science ☺

Week 2 – Is “sex” a genuine scientific category?

Tuesday 9/6 Radiolab Podcast: *Gonads – X&Y*

Thursday 9/8 *The Sex/Gender Perplex* (Fausto-Sterling)

Week 3 – Is “sex” a genuine scientific category?

Tuesday 9/13 *How Common Is Intersex? A Response to Anne Fausto-Sterling* (Sax)

Thursday 9/15 *Sex Redefined* (Ainsworth)

Week 4 – Is “race” a genuine scientific category?

Tuesday 9/20 *How to Argue with a Racist: Introduction and Ch.1* (Rutherford)

Thursday 9/22 *How to Argue with a Racist: Ch.2* (Rutherford)

Week 5 – The invention of “race” and its ties to science

Tuesday 9/27 *Fatal Invention Ch. 1* (Roberts)

Thursday 9/29 *Fatal Invention Ch. 2* (Roberts)

Friday 9/30 **SHORT PAPER 1 DUE BY 5pm**

UNIT 2: BIOLOGICAL DETERMINISM AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY (WEEKS 6-9):

Week 6 – Some History of Social Darwinism and Eugenics

Tuesday 10/4 Radiolab Podcast: *G- Unfit*

Thursday 10/6 *Eugenics never went away* (Wilson)

Week 7 – Modern Uses of Biological Determinism

Tuesday 10/11 Radiolab Podcast: *G- The Miseducation of Larry*

Thursday 10/13 *Environmental Racism* (Grossman)

Week 8 – Biological Determinism about Sex

Tuesday 10/18 *The Gendered Brain Ch. 1* (Rippon)

Thursday 10/20 No Class – Fall Break

Week 9 – Debunking Sex-based Biological Determinism

Tuesday 10/25 *The Gendered Brain Ch. 13* (Rippon)

Thursday 10/27 *Delusions of Gender Ch. 4* (Fine)

Week 10 – Debunking Sex-based Biological Determinism cont.

Tuesday 11/1 *Delusions of Gender Ch. 5* (Fine)

Thursday 11/3 Class Optional- Paper Workshop

Friday 11/4 **SHORT PAPER 2 DUE BY 5pm**

UNIT 3: THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE (WEEKS 10-14)

Week 11 – Examples of the social construction of scientific knowledge

Tuesday 11/8 *The Macho Sperm Myth* (Martin)

Thursday 11/10 Class Cancelled

Week 12 – The nature of social construction of scientific knowledge

Tuesday 11/15 *Science as Social Knowledge: Ch. 6 Research on Sex Differences* (Longino)

Thursday 11/17 *Scientific Studies: Last Week Tonight with John Oliver* (youtube)

THANKSGIVING BREAK (No Class 11/21-11/25)

Week 13 – What does all of this mean for science? (a.k.a. Why Trust Science?)

Tuesday 11/29 *Science as Social Knowledge: Ch. 1 Good Science, Bad Science* (Longino)

Thursday 12/1 *Impartiality Isn't Impartial: Gender, Race, Law, and Science* (Valde and Scarffe)

Week 14

Tuesday 12/6 **Current Issues Group Discussion**

Thursday 12/8 Review day!

Friday 12/9 **TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE BY 5pm**