

BILD60: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Relation to Human Biology
Course Information (updated 30 March 2020)
Spring Quarter 2020
Class: MWF 3:00-3:50 PM PST

Section A01: Thursdays 7:00-7:50 PM

Section A02: Wednesdays 11:00-11:50 AM

Zoom information: Zoom sessions for each class, section, and office hours can be accessed from the course home page in Canvas. Please note that since some students may not be able to attend in real time, class and sections will be recorded and made available for students to view asynchronously.

Information in this syllabus is subject to change. Any changes will be posted on the Canvas course site.

Resources for remote learning

This website has useful resources for how to learn remotely:

<https://digitallearning.ucsd.edu/learners/learning-remote.html>

[Links to an external site.](#)

Professor

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Course principles

By its very nature, this course will include readings and discussions on difficult topics that affect human relations and feelings. Mutual respect and sensitivity are essential, as well as the strong consideration of privacy and tolerance. The classroom should be treated and experienced as a “safe zone”, where participation, conversation and discussion are encouraged and lead to learning and understanding, not to confrontation. We will discuss many topics where there is no ‘right’ answer, where people disagree on what a desirable endpoint might be, and where even people who agree on a desired goal may disagree on the best method to get there. You should consider these points of disagreement to be opportunities to learn from your peers and from the

readings and opportunities to hone your thinking and potentially, but not necessarily, to change your mind. Adherence to these principles is a requirement.

Furthermore, students in this course can be anywhere in their college career and may not be biology majors, so people are coming at these questions with different levels of biological knowledge and background. As a result, it will be necessary to spend some time in the course to bring everyone up to speed on some of the biological knowledge that is necessary to fully and critically engage with the material.

Course overview

In this course we will examine how biology has influenced and continues to influence society around the issues of diversity, equity and inclusion. The course integrates topics from biology, history, sociology, and anthropology, and the primary focus for this quarter will be on the intersection of biology and race. We will trace recurring themes about who we are and how we got here from the 1800s to the present day, and a major goal of the course is to analyze the role that biology plays in questions of identity, race, and society in today's era of personal genomics compared to the role it has played at various key times in the past.

The course begins with a consideration of the role that science plays in a democratic society. This is a biology course and so the course then moves to an exploration of the distribution of genetic variation among humans and to an exploration of the genetics of human traits. We will then examine the history of eugenics, particularly in the mid-late 1800s through the 1940s, in the context of larger societal changes that were happening. This will lead us to study the history of race as a concept and how it was intertwined with the development of biology. We will track how views of the biological basis of race waxed and waned and how this relationship is changing today with new discoveries about the recent history of our species and recent socio-political movements, both national and global. We will move to personal genomics and end with an exploration of the relationship between biology, poverty, and stress.

Readings

This is a reading-intensive course. The reading assignments will be posted on Perusall, which is a tool for social annotation and collaborative reading. You can access it through the assignment links on Canvas. Because class time will be spent mostly in discussion, it is very important that you critically read the assignments before class.

Videos

Because of the unusual nature of this quarter, you will have a lot of videos to watch. Sometimes these will be short webinars that I post in lieu of lectures. Sometimes these will be material from the web including interviews with people, documentaries, podcasts (usually just audio), lectures, or other videos that touch upon whatever topic we are discussing.

Discussions

This is a discussion class and is meant to be highly interactive. This quarter, we will accomplish this through breakout rooms in the class Zoom sessions, through Perusall, and potentially through other tools.

Writing

You will be asked to write a lot in this course. This will take the form of annotations in Perusall, short summaries and responses to readings, and a few 2-3 page papers on topics covered. The paper assignments will be posted in the 2nd or 3rd week. The goal of these is to help you develop your understanding of the material and to think more deeply about the intersection between biology and society. At the end of the course you will turn in a 10-12 page paper on a topic at the intersection of DEI and biology that we didn't cover in the course.

Discussion Sections

The discussion sections are important parts of the course. Your IA Nuo Tian will use them to review material and to facilitate discussions of some of the material that you will read but that we will not have time to go over during class.

Evaluation/Grading:

Weekly News Assignments: (10% of grade) Every week starting at the end of this week (week 1) each student must find a recent (within the previous 6 months) news article that is related to DEI and biology. Students must write a brief report describing the news item and how it is related to some aspect of diversity, equity or inclusion. The source (or URL) of the news article must be cited in the report to receive credit. These news reports will be turned in through Canvas and are due every SATURDAY by MIDNIGHT. They will be graded on a scale of 0 – 2 points and you can drop the lowest score. We will aim to discuss a news article at the end of every class starting the 2nd week. These will be chosen at random and so you should always come prepared to give a brief, 2 – 3 minute presentation on your news item. A template for the reports will be provided.

Perusall annotations: (35% of grade) Reading and thinking about the reading is an essential part of this course and you will be asked to do a lot of it. Your goal should be to become adept at summarizing an author's argument, to be able to dissect the structure of a piece of writing and describe the purpose of each paragraph, and to map the structure of the argument.

Shorter writing assignments: (37% of grade) In this course writing is a means of refining your thinking process. In addition to the Perusall annotations you will be asked to reflect upon your own assumptions about the material, to revisit these assumptions, to critique and respond to different authors that we will read, and to explain the material to various audiences.

Research report: (15% of grade) In the last half of the course you will work on a 10-12 page essay about a topic of your choosing at the intersection of DEI and biology that we didn't cover in the course. This will be due at the end of the course.

Reflection Essay (3% of grade) At the end of the class you will be asked to write a 1 – 2 page essay reflecting on your experience in the class.

Academic misconduct

Students are expected to do their own work, as outlined in the UCSD Policy on Academic Integrity. Academic misconduct is broadly defined as any prohibited and dishonest means to receive course credit, a higher grade, or avoid a lower grade. Academic misconduct misrepresents your knowledge and abilities, which undermines the instructor's ability to determine how well you are doing in the course. Please do not risk your future by cheating - you will fail this course and be referred to the UCSD administration for further action. Students suspected of Academic Integrity violations will be invited to Zoom follow-up meetings where they will be asked (in real time, on video) to justify their answers. If the instructor is not convinced during the meeting or if the student refuses to participate they will be referred for Academic Integrity violations.

Accommodations

Students requesting accommodations and services due to a disability for this course need to provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD), prior to eligibility for requests. Receipt of AFAs in advance is necessary for appropriate planning for the provision of reasonable accommodations. Please note that instructors are unable to provide accommodations unless they are first authorized by OSD. For more information, contact the OSD at (858) 534-4382 (voice), osd@ucsd.edu, or visit <https://osd.ucsd.edu/>

[Links to an external site.](#)

Course topic schedule (subject to change!)

Week 1: The role of science in a democratic society

Week 2: The structure of human variation - an introduction

Weeks 3-4: What role do genes play in generating human variation?

Weeks 5-6: Eugenics, social upheaval, and the new biology - pre-WWII

Week 7: Human evolution and its history; the intertwined history of biology and race

Week 8: Human genomes, migration, and the revival of the biology of race debate

Week 9: Biology and society in the age of personal genomics

Week 10: Biology, stress, and poverty