

# IDH 3931 Sick of Race: How Racism Harms Health and Misleads Medicine

Tuesday, Period 10 (5:10 – 6:00 p.m.)

Hume 119

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Student Hours: Tuesdays, 3:00 – 4:30 p.m.; Thursdays, 12:00 – 1:30 p.m.; and [by appointment](#)

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## Course Description and Objectives

Many people have described the COVID-19 pandemic as “unprecedented.” But in at least one respect, it has followed the contours of history: The burden of suffering and death has been greatest for Black, Indigenous, and other people of color. Some people in power—again, following historical precedent—have suggested that the root cause of this pattern is some unspecified genetic factor, deflecting attention from evidence that COVID-19 reflects embodied social inequalities. In this seminar, we place these dynamics in context by examining (a) the health costs of systemic racism and (b) how false ideas about race, genes, and disease continue to lead clinicians, researchers, and policy makers astray. The implications for our understanding of race and racism extend beyond medicine to society at large.

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- identify, describe, and explain the ways that racism harms health
- analyze assumptions that researchers, practitioners, policymakers, journalists, and others make when addressing racial inequities in health
- develop and present effective responses to contemporary scientific and policy debates about racial inequities in health
- identify antiracist frameworks for redressing present and historical harms and working toward health equity

## Course Format

The course will be conducted as a one-credit seminar. Each week, depending on class size, one or two students will be responsible for leading discussion of assigned readings. Seminar leaders will prepare and distribute critical questions ahead of time and help to moderate the discussion. All students are expected to participate in discussion. Students will also maintain a weekly learning journal in which they summarize what they learned from the week’s reading, connect it to current events, and reflect on how it relates to their intellectual, personal, and professional development.

## Course Materials

We will read a selection of scholarly articles from literature in medicine, public health, and the health-related social sciences. Articles will be available through Canvas and the UF Libraries.

## Course Requirements and Grading

Course grades consist of three components: participation in weekly discussions of readings (30%), seminar leader (20%), and the weekly learning journal (50%).

1. *Class participation* (30%). Your participation is essential to the success of the course. The goal is to build a vibrant learning community that fosters creativity, self-expression, curiosity, and insight. I have laid out a structure for the seminar, but success depends on a collective commitment to the quality of discussion. Consequently, it's important that you attend class and participate actively in discussion. Active participation requires you to read the assigned articles, prepare thoughtful questions and critical discussion points, listen actively, and engage with the contributions of your classmates. The quality, not just quantity, of your contributions is what counts.
2. *Seminar leader* (20%). Each week one or two students will be assigned to lead the seminar. Your job in this role is to stimulate and guide thoughtful discussion about the week's readings. The purpose of serving as a discussion leader is to enhance your skills in critical reading and interpretation, oral communication, active listening, and synthesis and evaluation of ideas and arguments.
3. *Learning journal* (50%). Too often we think of writing as the last step in putting together ideas, when often it helps us create them. To stimulate your thinking, I ask you to keep a learning journal in which you summarize the key arguments from each week's reading and connect it to your own ideas. I especially hope to see evidence of how the reading and discussion prompts reflection on your own intellectual, personal, and professional development. You will submit your weekly entries via Canvas. See the weekly assignments for more details and some prompts to consider as you reflect on what you've learned each week.

Final grades will be A (100–94), A- (<94–90) B+ (<90–87), B (<87–84), B- (<84–80) C+ (<80–77), C (<77–74), C- (<74–70), D+ (<70–67), D (<67–64), D- (<64–61), E (<61). The University's policies on grading are available at <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>.

## Attendance

Your presence is a prerequisite to your participation. Unexcused absences will adversely affect your grade in addition to your learning. In general, acceptable reasons for absence include illness, serious family emergencies, special curricular requirements, military obligations, religious holidays, or participation in official university activities. Students who know they will have such absences should communicate with me as soon as possible, but no later than one week after the absence. For more on the University's attendance policy, please see <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>.

## Late Assignments

Please complete all assignments by the stated due dates. I recognize that we are entering our third year of pandemic learning, and that people have been affected in different ways by the ongoing strain of our times. For that reason, you can expect me to be understanding of extenuating circumstances. However, don't allow my compassion to dissuade you from giving the course your best effort. If you neglect assignments, it will not only diminish your own learning but also adversely affect the learning community we are trying to create. In general, I will accept journal entries up to two days late. Beyond that, maximum credit for each assignment will decrease by 10% per day.

## Academic Honor Code

Unless it is specifically connected to assigned collaborative work, all work should be individual. Evidence of collusion (working with someone not connected to the class or assignment), plagiarism (use of someone else's published or unpublished words or design without acknowledgment) or multiple submissions (submitting the same paper in different courses) will lead to the Department's and the University's procedures for dealing with academic dishonesty. All students are expected to honor their commitment to the university's Honor Code (available online at <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/>).

## Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. It is important to share your accommodation letter with me and discuss your access needs as early as possible in the semester.

## Course Evaluation Process

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at [gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/](http://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/). Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via [ufl.bluera.com/ufl/](http://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/). Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at [gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/](http://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/).

## UF Health and Wellness Services

- *U Matter, We Care.* If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu), 352-392-1575, or visit [umatter.ufl.edu/](http://umatter.ufl.edu/) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
- *Counseling and Wellness Center.* Visit [counseling.ufl.edu/](http://counseling.ufl.edu/) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.
- *Student Health Care Center.* Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit [shcc.ufl.edu/](http://shcc.ufl.edu/).

- *University Police Department:* Visit [police.ufl.edu/](http://police.ufl.edu/) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
- *UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center:* For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, [ufhealth.org/emergency-room-trauma-center](http://ufhealth.org/emergency-room-trauma-center).

## Academic Resources

- *E-learning technical support:* Contact the UF Computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at [helpdesk@ufl.edu](mailto:helpdesk@ufl.edu).
- *Career Connections Center:* Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services [career.ufl.edu/](http://career.ufl.edu/).
- *Library Support:* [cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask](http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask) various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.
- *Teaching Center:* Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352-392-6420. General study skills and tutoring. [teachingcenter.ufl.edu/](http://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/)
- *Writing Studio:* 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. [writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/](http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/)
- *Student Complaints On-Campus:* [sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/](http://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/)

## Syllabus Change Policy

This syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advanced notice.

## Course Schedule and Readings

Week	Date	Reading and Activities
1	January 11	Orientation and introductions
<b>Framing the Problem</b>		
2	January 18	<p>Krieger, Nancy. 2003. "Does Racism Harm Health? Did Child Abuse Exist Before 1962? On Explicit Questions, Critical Science, and Current Controversies: An Ecosocial Perspective." <i>American Journal of Public Health</i> 93 (2): 194–99.</p> <p>CDC. 2021. "Director's Commentary." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. October 25, 2021. <a href="https://www.cdc.gov/healthequity/racism-disparities/director-commentary.html">https://www.cdc.gov/healthequity/racism-disparities/director-commentary.html</a>.</p>
3	January 25	<p>Gravlee, Clarence C. 2009. "How Race Becomes Biology: Embodiment of Social Inequality." <i>American Journal of Physical Anthropology</i> 139 (1): 47–57.</p> <p>Gravlee, Clarence C.. 2020. "Racism, Not Genetics, Explains Why Black Americans Are Dying of COVID-19." Scientific American Blog Network. June 7, 2020. <a href="https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/voices/racism-not-genetics-explains-why-black-americans-are-dying-of-covid-19/">https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/voices/racism-not-genetics-explains-why-black-americans-are-dying-of-covid-19/</a>.</p>
<b>How Racism Harms Health</b>		
4	February 1	<p>Bailey, Zinzi D., Justin M. Feldman, and Mary T. Bassett. 2021. "How Structural Racism Works: Racist Policies as a Root Cause of U.S. Racial Health Inequities." <i>The New England Journal of Medicine</i> 384 (8): 768–73.</p> <p>Krieger, Nancy, Gretchen Van Wye, Mary Huynh, Pamela D. Waterman, Gil Maduro, Wenhui Li, R. Charon Gwynn, Oxiris Barbot, and Mary T. Bassett. 2020. "Structural Racism, Historical Redlining, and Risk of Preterm Birth in New York City, 2013-2017." <i>American Journal of Public Health</i> 110 (7): 1046–53.</p>
5	February 8	<p>Cheadle, Jacob E., Bridget J. Goosby, Joseph C. Jochman, Cara C. Tomaso, Chelsea B. Kozikowski Yancey, and Timothy D. Nelson. 2020. "Race and Ethnic Variation in College Students' Allostatic Regulation of Racism-Related Stress." <i>Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America</i> 117 (49): 31053–62.</p>

		<p>“SOS 80: The Grind of Discrimination with Drs. Lance Gravlee and Connie Mulligan,” [Podcast] Human Biology Association, June 23, 2020 <a href="https://www.humbio.org/sos-80-the-grind-of-discrimination-with-drs-lance-gravlee-and-connie-mulligan/">https://www.humbio.org/sos-80-the-grind-of-discrimination-with-drs-lance-gravlee-and-connie-mulligan/</a></p>
6	February 15	<p>Bor, Jacob, Atheendar S. Venkataramani, David R. Williams, and Alexander C. Tsai. 2018. “Police Killings and Their Spillover Effects on the Mental Health of Black Americans: A Population-Based, Quasi-Experimental Study.” <i>The Lancet</i> 392 (10144): 302–10.</p> <p>Sewell, Alyasah Ali, Justin M. Feldman, Rashawn Ray, Keon L. Gilbert, Kevin A. Jefferson, and Hedwig Lee. 2021. “Illness Spillovers of Lethal Police Violence: The Significance of Gendered Marginalization.” <i>Ethnic and Racial Studies</i> 44 (7): 1089–1114.</p>
7	February 22	<p>Owens, Deirdre Cooper, and Sharla M. Fett. 2019. “Black Maternal and Infant Health: Historical Legacies of Slavery.” <i>American Journal of Public Health</i> 109 (10): 1342–45.</p> <p>Oyarzun, Yesmar. 2020. “Plantation Politics, Paranoia, and Public Health on the Frontlines of America’s COVID-19 Response.” <i>Medical Anthropology Quarterly</i> 34 (4): 578–90.</p>
8	March 1	<p>Laster Pirtle, Whitney N. 2020. “Racial Capitalism: A Fundamental Cause of Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic Inequities in the United States.” <i>Health Education &amp; Behavior</i> 47 (4): 504–8.</p> <p>Gravlee, Clarence C. 2020. “Systemic Racism, Chronic Health Inequities, and COVID -19: A Syndemic in the Making?” <i>American Journal of Human Biology</i> 32 (5): e23482.</p>
9	March 15	<p>Pearson, Jay A. 2008. “Can’t Buy Me Whiteness: New Lessons from the Titanic on Race, Ethnicity, and Health.” <i>Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race</i> 5 (01): 27.</p> <p>Malat, Jennifer, Sarah Mayorga-Gallo, and David R. Williams. 2018. “The Effects of Whiteness on the Health of Whites in the USA.” <i>Social Science &amp; Medicine</i> 199 (February): 148–56.</p>
<b>How Racism Misleads Medicine</b>		
10	March 22	<p>Amutah, Christina, Kaliya Greenidge, Adjoa Mante, Michelle Munyikwa, Sanjna L. Surya, Eve Higginbotham, David S. Jones, et al. 2021. “Misrepresenting Race - The Role of Medical Schools in Propagating Physician Bias.” <i>The New England Journal of Medicine</i> 384 (9): 872–78.</p> <p>Vyas, Darshali A., Leo G. Eisenstein, and David S. Jones. 2020. “Hidden in Plain Sight - Reconsidering the Use of Race Correction in</p>

		Clinical Algorithms.” <i>The New England Journal of Medicine</i> 383 (9): 874–82.
11	March 29	<p>Gravlee, Clarence C. 2021. “How Whiteness Works: JAMA and the Refusals of White Supremacy.” <i>Somatosphere</i>. March 27, 2021. <a href="http://somatosphere.net/2021/how-whiteness-works.html/">http://somatosphere.net/2021/how-whiteness-works.html/</a>.</p> <p>Krieger, Nancy, Rhea W. Boyd, Fernando De Maio, and Aletha Maybank. 2021. “Medicine’s Privileged Gatekeepers: Producing Harmful Ignorance About Racism And Health.” <i>Health Affairs Blog</i>. April 20, 2021. <a href="https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hblog20210415.305480/full">https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hblog20210415.305480/full</a>.</p>
12	April 5	<p>Braun, Lundy, Anna Wentz, Reuben Baker, Ellen Richardson, and Jennifer Tsai. 2021. “Racialized Algorithms for Kidney Function: Erasing Social Experience.” <i>Social Science &amp; Medicine</i> 268 (January): 113548.</p> <p>Tsai, Jennifer W., Jessica P. Cerdeña, William C. Goedel, William S. Asch, Vanessa Grubbs, Mallika L. Mendu, and Jay S. Kaufman. 2021. “Evaluating the Impact and Rationale of Race-Specific Estimations of Kidney Function: Estimations from U.S. NHANES, 2015-2018.” <i>EClinicalMedicine</i> 42 (101197): 101197.</p>
13	April 12	<p>Cerdeña, Jessica P., Marie V. Plaisime, and Jennifer Tsai. 2020. “From Race-Based to Race-Conscious Medicine: How Anti-Racist Uprisings Call Us to Act.” <i>The Lancet</i> 396 (10257): 1125–28.</p> <p>Tsai, Jennifer, Edwin Lindo, and Khiara Bridges. 2021. “Seeing the Window, Finding the Spider: Applying Critical Race Theory to Medical Education (MedCRT) to Make up Where Biomedical Models and Social Determinants of Health Curricula Fall Short.” <i>Frontiers in Public Health</i> 9: 582.</p>
14	April 19	Krieger, Nancy. 2020. “ENOUGH: COVID-19, Structural Racism, Police Brutality, Plutocracy, Climate Change-and Time for Health Justice, Democratic Governance, and an Equitable, Sustainable Future.” <i>American Journal of Public Health</i> 110 (11): 1620–23.