

UnCommon Read: The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks
IDH 2930 (27218)
Spring 2024

Instructor: Bianca D. Evans-Donaldson, PhD, MBA
Associate Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Office: 2014 Turlington Hall
Phone: 352-392-0780
E-mail: bevansdonaldson@ufl.edu
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 12:30 – 2:00 pm (or by appointment)

Meeting Time: Tuesdays, period 8 (3:00-3:50), Little Hall 117

Course Materials:

- Required Texts: *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot
- All information for this class will be available on Canvas.

Course Description:

HeLa cells are one of the oldest and most commonly used human cell line. Even though the utility of this cell line is vast and important, the history behind how the cells were isolated and used is a bioethical conundrum. Science, medicine, and technology have progressed significantly because of the use of HeLa cells and with this progress have come ethical questions. The intent of this course is to focus on the biological, medical, technological, and ethical issues surrounding HeLa cells.

Course Objectives:

1. To understand HeLa cells and their uses.
2. To understand the ethical issues surrounding HeLa cells.
3. To be able to make an informed analysis of bioethical issues.
4. To critically discuss bioethical issues and scientific literature pertaining to HeLa cells in a group setting.

Expectations:

Each week students will be expected to read the assigned chapter(s), prepare discussion notes, and participate in class discussions. Students will reflect on thought questions posed prior to their reading and will come to class with responses prepared to these questions. Students will discuss their ideas in breakout groups, followed by a class discussion of the chapters. Depending on class size, students may have rotating responsibilities to lead part of the discussion. Each class member should come to class ready to contribute every week and not merely to listen.

Each week, students should come up with one discussion question you would want to ask if they were leading a discussion on the assigned reading. As much as possible, questions should reference specific passages in the text. This question will be submitted via Canvas on Mondays by 11:59 pm each week.

Course Schedule:

Each week, we will discuss the information presented in several chapters of the Skloot book. This schedule is subject to change.

Week	Date	Reading	Assignments
1	January 9	Skloot Book: Introduction	Introductions
2	January 16	Skloot Book: Chapters 1-3	Readings, Discussion Questions
3	January 23	Skloot Book: Chapters 4-6	Readings, Discussion Questions
4	January 30	Skloot Book: Chapters 7-9	Readings, Discussion Questions
5	February 6	Skloot Book: Chapters 10-13	Readings, Discussion Questions
6	February 13	Skloot Book: Chapters 14-16	Readings, Discussion Questions
7	February 20	Skloot Book: Chapters 17-19	Readings, Discussion Questions
8	February 27	Skloot Book: Chapters 20-22	Readings, Discussion Questions
9	March 5	Skloot Book: Chapters 23-24	HeLa Case Study Student Presentations
10	SPRING BREAK		
11	March 19	Skloot Book: Chapters 25-27	Readings, Discussion Questions
12	March 26	Skloot Book: Chapters 28-31	Readings, Discussion Questions
13	April 2	Skloot Book: Chapters 32-34	Readings, Discussion Questions
14	April 9	Skloot Book: Chapters 35-End	Readings, Discussion Questions
15	April 16		Student Presentations
16	April 23		Student Presentations

Grading and Attendance Policies

Reading, Discussion, and Participation (60%)

HeLa Cells Case Study (15%)

Final Project (25%)

Student Assignments:

Reading, Discussion, and Participation

Each week, we will discuss chapters of the assigned book. Student participation is essential. Class participation will be measured during regular in-class activities based on attendance and contributions to class discussion. Before each class, students will submit one written discussion question based on the weekly reading via Canvas. For each class, one or two students will lead the discussion of the readings.

HeLa Cells Case Study

Students will write a short essay (~2 pages maximum, not including citations) about “Should HeLa cells be used in research? Why or why not?” Please give one specific example in your description. Each student will give a ~3-minute presentation (with one slide) in class on March 7th.

Bioethics Final Project

Students will work in pairs on a project with a topic of their choosing related to the bioethical concerns faced by researchers currently using both HeLa cells and cells harvested from other donors to advance knowledge in the biomedical sciences. Additional details on the final project will be provided in Canvas. The final project includes a 25-minute presentation in one of the two final classes. The goal is to consider the implications of what you have learned from the readings and class discussion.

Grading Scale:

93-100 (A), 90-92 (A-), 87-89 (B+), 83-86 (B), 80-82 (B-), 77-79 (C+), 73-76 (C), 70-72 (C-), 67-69 (D+), 60-66 (D), 60-62 (D-), Below 59 (E)

Attendance: Requirements for class attendance, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>. It is understood that valid absences may occur. If you have a valid documented excuse and notify the instructor by email in advance, you will be able to make up missed class discussions through written means.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, <https://disability.ufl.edu/>) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Course Evaluation: Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing the online evaluation at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two weeks of the semester, but you will be informed about specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available at any time at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>

Academic Conduct: UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the

members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. To read the Conduct Code, visit <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>

Campus Resources

U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit 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 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

University Police Department: Visit 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, FL 32608; [UF Health Emergency room/trauma center](http://ufhealth.org/emergency-room/trauma-center).

GatorWell Health Promotion Services: For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit gatorwell.ufsa.ufl.edu or call 352-273-4450

E-learning Technical Support: Contact the UF Computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357 or via email at helpdesk@ufl.edu.

Career Connections Center: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services. <https://career.ufl.edu/>

Library Support: Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources. <https://uflib.ufl.edu/find/ask/>

Teaching Center: Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352-392-6420. General study skills and tutoring. <https://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/>

Writing Studio: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>

Student Complaints On-Campus: Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage for more information. <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-%20code-student-conduct-code/>

On-Line Student Complaints: View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process at <https://distance.ufl.edu/getting-help/student-complaint-process/>