

## ANG 6930 Racism, Medicine, and Health

Mondays, 9:35 a.m. – 12:35 p.m.

[Online](#) and MCCA 2196

**Dr. Clarence (Lance) Gravlee**

Office: Turlington B370

Student Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.; please [reserve an appointment](#)

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### Course Description and Objectives

COVID-19 has shined a spotlight on race and health, but the staggering inequalities we are witnessing now reflect centuries-old processes. This graduate seminar grapples with the relations among racism, health, and medicine, with a primary focus on the United States. It examines the historical roots of medical racism, the role of medical and genetic research in constructing and deconstructing race as a biological concept, and the ways that systemic racism harms health—before, during, and likely after the COVID-19 pandemic. We will read broadly across disciplines, including anthropology, biology, history, law, public health, and science and technology studies.

By the end of the seminar, you should be able to describe the historical and contemporary role of scientific racism in medical research and practice, engage in current debates about the role of race in genetic research and clinical practice, and articulate ways that racism becomes embodied in health outcomes. You will also hone your skills in critical reading, analytic writing, literature research, and oral presentation and debate.

### Teaching Philosophy

The aims of graduate school are fundamentally different from those of undergraduate education. Undergraduate education is concerned primarily with instilling the essential knowledge in a field and—at its best—with preparing students for a lifetime of learning. Graduate education is about turning students into professional researchers and teachers. These different aims correspond to distinct responsibilities for both teachers and learners at the graduate and undergraduate levels. As aspiring professionals, you are responsible for taking initiative to master the key ideas and literature in the field and for seeking out the resources you need. My role is to facilitate your learning and professional development as independent scholars by introducing you to pertinent literature, by challenging you to evaluate and synthesize the material, and by rewarding individual initiative. The course format, assignments, and evaluation of your performance are designed to meet these aims.

### Course Format

In practice, my teaching philosophy means that you will be actively engaged in mastering the course material. The course will be conducted as a topic-driven seminar, with an intensive focus on all or part of one book each week. You are expected to complete assigned readings before

class, write critical summaries of assigned texts, look for connections between readings and current events or your own interests, and be prepared to discuss and analyze the issues the readings address. Each week, one or two students will be assigned to lead our discussion and synthesize the material, but all are expected to participate actively.

## Course Materials

Braun, L. (2014). *Breathing Race into the Machine: The Surprising Career of the Spirometer from Plantation to Genetics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Davis, D.-A. (2019). *Reproductive Injustice: Racism, Pregnancy, and Premature Birth*. New York: NYU Press.

Hatch, A. R. (2016). *Blood Sugar: Racial Pharmacology and Food Justice in Black America*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Hogarth, R. A. (2017). *Medicalizing Blackness: Making Racial Difference in the Atlantic World, 1780-1840*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Nelson, A. (2013). *Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight Against Medical Discrimination*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Reese, A. M. (2019). *Black Food Geographies: Race, Self-Reliance, and Food Access in Washington, D.C.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Roberts, D. (2011). *Fatal Invention: How Science, Politics, and Big Business Re-Create Race in the Twenty-First Century*. New York: The New Press.

Strings, S. (2019). *Fearing the Black Body: The Racial Origins of Fat Phobia*. New York: NYU Press.

These required books are available locally at the UF Bookstore or through online retailers.

## Course Requirements and Grading

Your final grade has three components: class participation (20 percent), seminar moderator (20 percent), critical précis (20 percent), and a research paper (40 percent). Final grades will be A (90-100), A- (87-89), B+ (84-86), B (80-83), B- (77-79), C+ (74-76), C (70-73), C- (67-69), D+ (64-66), D (60-63), D- (57-59), E (<57).

1. *Class participation (20%)*. I expect you to attend each class meeting and take an active part in discussions. Active participation requires that you read all assigned readings, take notes on the readings, and prepare thoughtful questions and critical discussion points. I will evaluate your class participation on the quality of your contributions, not just on how often you speak in class. The purpose of evaluating your participation is to facilitate your grasp of the material by encouraging you to prepare for class and by promoting thoughtful analysis and discussion.
2. *Seminar moderator (20%)*. Each week one or two students will be assigned to moderate the seminar. Your job is to stimulate and guide thoughtful discussion about the concepts and

arguments relevant to the week's reading. If you and another student are assigned to the same week, you are expected to meet ahead of the class time to coordinate your presentation of the material. The purpose of serving as seminar moderator is to enhance your skills in critical reading and interpretation, oral presentation, active listening, and synthesis and evaluation of arguments and ideas.

- a. *Discussion questions.* You (and your partner, if assigned) should develop 5–10 thought-provoking questions for seminar participants to address during class. You must post these questions to the Discussion forum on e-Learning (<http://elearning.ufl.edu/>) at least **24 hours** before we meet for class (i.e., by Monday morning at 9:35). The questions should be designed to stimulate discussion and debate.
  - b. *Discussion leader.* You (and your partner, if assigned) will be responsible for facilitating our discussion in class meetings. You should begin with a brief (≤10-minute) but spirited summary of the key ideas and debates from the week's readings. You should have a flexible plan for guiding our discussion through the important elements of the week's readings, using the questions you posted to e-Learning. Be prepared to share your own insights about the readings.
3. *Critical précis (20%).* You are expected to write four critical précis of assigned books (you choose which four of the eight). A critical précis is a concise summary and analysis of an argument. It should distill the main thesis of the book, explain key concepts or ideas, critically examine the evidence on which the argument is based, and explain the significance of the argument. Give your précis an introduction, body, and conclusion. The introduction should identify the main argument of the text. Body paragraphs should introduce and explain key concepts and ideas, citing examples from the text. The Conclusion should summarize the contribution of the book and reflect on its significance. Each critical précis should be approximately 750–1500 words and must be submitted via e-Learning (<http://elearning.ufl.edu/>) before the last class session in which the relevant book will be discussed.
  4. *Research Paper (40%).* The research paper is an opportunity for you to develop expertise in an area of interest to you. The project may be (1) a review paper or critical essay on a theme related to the seminar, (2) an analysis of secondary data, or (3) primary research. The paper should be approximately 6000–8000 words in length and should be written in the form of a journal article. The paper is due via e-Learning on **April 23**. I encourage you to discuss your plans for the paper with me as soon as possible. To be successful, you should make steady progress on the paper throughout the semester (e.g., identify a topic by the third week of the semester, generate a working bibliography by the fourth week, start writing [smart notes](#) from the first week of the semester, and start assembling the first draft by the seventh week). You should be prepared to make a brief (~10-minute) oral presentation about your project on the final day of class.

### Policy on Late Assignments

You are required to complete all assignments by the stated due dates. Late assignments will lose one half-letter grade for each day past the deadline. There are no make-up opportunities for any

assignment, as you will have ample time to complete each requirement. I will not assign grades of “incomplete” except in the most unusual, extreme circumstances of incapacitating illness, death of family members, or other university-approved excuses. You must provide documentation of such circumstances from a medical doctor, funeral home, or other appropriate authority.

## 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 <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/students.html>).

## Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation. *Please make any requests by the second week of class.*

## UF Counseling Services

Resources are available on-campus for students having personal problems or lacking clear career and academic goals that interfere with their academic performance. These resources include:

- University Counseling Center, 301 Peabody Hall, 392-1575, personal and career counseling
- Student Mental Health, Student Health Care Center, 392-1171, personal counseling
- Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS), Student Health Care Center, 392-1161, sexual counseling
- Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601, career development assistance and counseling.

## 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
1	January 11	Course overview and expectations
2	January 18	No class—Martin Luther King, Jr .Day Ahrens, <i>How to Take Smart Notes</i> ( <a href="#">excerpt</a> )
3	January 25	Hogarth, <i>Medicalizing Blackness</i>
4	February 1	Braun, <i>Breathing Race into the Machine</i> , Introduction–Ch. 4
5	February 8	Braun, <i>Breathing Race into the Machine</i> , Ch. 5–Epilogue
6	February 15	Roberts, <i>Fatal Invention</i> , Part I–II
7	February 22	Roberts, <i>Fatal Invention</i> , Part III–Conclusion
8	March 1	Hatch, <i>Blood Sugar</i>
9	March 8	Strings, <i>Fearing the Black Body</i> , Introduction–Ch. 4
10	March 15	Strings, <i>Fearing the Black Body</i> , Ch. 4–Epilogue
11	March 22	Reese, <i>Black Food Geographies</i>
12	March 29	Reese, <i>Black Food Geographies</i>
13	April 5	Davis, <i>Reproductive Injustice</i>
14	April 12	Nelson, <i>Body and Soul</i>
15	April 19	Class presentations and synthesis