

University of Wisconsin--Madison

Race, American Medicine and Public Health
Spring 2025



Course Number: 523 MedHist/HistSci./AfroAmer.

Credit Hours: 3

Course Designation and Attributes:

Level: Advanced

Breadth: Social Studies

L&S Credit type: Counts as LAS Credit (L&S)

General education: Ethnic Studies

Enrollment requirement: Junior Standing

Counts toward 50% graduate coursework requirement

Instruction Mode: Classroom Instruction

Room: Social Science 6102

Lecture time: TuTh 11:00 am-12:15 pm.

Instructor:

Susan E. Lederer, Ph.D.

Ronald Numbers Professor of History of Medicine and Bioethics

Email: selederer@wisc.edu

Office: MSC 1420 (1300 University Avenue)

Office Hours: In person Wednesday 1-3 pm., or by appt.

Description:

The problem of the 20th century, wrote sociologist W.E.B. DuBois in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), “is the problem of the color-line.” This course considers the issue of the color line in American medicine and public health over the past three centuries. We will be looking at the ways in which skin color (and other elements of “racial identity”) has influenced the experiences of patients, physicians and nurses, and medical researchers, seeking to document and analyze how conceptions of race have shaped the health concerns and health outcomes of Americans in the past three hundred years. Topics include the origins of racial classification, the health and medical care of the enslaved, the use of blacks as research subjects, especially the Tuskegee Syphilis Study, the history of racial disparities in medicine, race and reproduction, and the struggle for justice in health care in the second half of the 20th century.

Learning outcomes:

Students, upon successful completion of the course, will be able to:

- identify key developments, actors, ideas, and institutions in the broad history of race, medicine and public health in America between 1700 and 2024.
- speak and write critically about primary and secondary historical sources by examining diverse interpretations of past events and ideas in their historical contexts.
- ask analytic questions about the ways in which ideas about race and the meaning of racial difference influenced the care patients of color received and how they experienced their illnesses and injuries.
- understand how conceptions of race influenced the medical and nursing professions, as well as medical institutions (dispensaries, hospitals, and blood donation centers).

Ethnic Studies Course Outcomes

As an Ethnic Studies Course, 523 has three important goals. It seeks:

- to impart an awareness of history’s impact on the present
- to enhance the ability to recognize and question assumptions
- to encourage a consciousness of self and other.

Course Policies and Requirements

Credit Hours and Student Workload:

This three-credit class meets for two, 75-minute class periods each week, and carries the expectation that students will work on course learning activities (reading, writing, film-viewing, studying, etc.) for about 3 hours for every class period. The syllabus includes more information about meeting times and expectations for student work.

Grading:

- | | |
|---|-----|
| • Quizzes and Participation | 20% |
| • In-class Midterm exam | 20% |
| • Research Paper and one-page description | 30% |
| • Research Paper Response | 10% |
| • Final exam | 20% |

Grades on assignments and exams are recorded as numerical scores out of a total of 100 points (these scores are later weighted to arrive at a final composite course grade). The table for converting your final composite (weighted) numerical grade into final letter grades is as follows:

- | | |
|----------------|----|
| • 93 and above | A |
| • 87 to 92.9 | AB |
| • 81-86.9 | B |
| • 75-80.9 | BC |
| • 69-74.9 | C |
| • 60-68.9 | D |
| • <60 | F |

In addition,

- students must submit all assignments and complete all assignments in order to pass this course.
- Students may **not** elect to opt out of an assignment and receive an F on it.
- Any non-emergency extensions must be requested prior to the due date.
- Although you are encouraged to discuss your papers with friends and classmates, no group work is allowed.

Writing Assignments

- a. Seven weekly short quizzes on the readings (weeks 2-12)
- b. Research paper

Students will write a research paper (10-12 pages in length) on some aspect of the history of race, medicine, and public health in America. The paper must reflect reading both primary and secondary sources as evidence, use footnotes, and include a bibliography. The topic must be approved in advance by the professor.

The paper requirement has three parts:

--One page description of paper topic and likely title, initial sources--both primary and secondary, and a paragraph of why this is a question worth asking.

This is due March 18.

--Paper due in class on April 15.

--One-page response to Professor Lederer's comments on your paper. Response is due May 1.

Exams

In-class midterm examination. February 27

Final examination May 7, 10:05 am. -12:05 pm.

IMPORTANT DATES Spring 2025

February 27	In-class midterm examination.
March 18	One-page description of paper topic due in class
March 22-30	Spring Break
April 15	Paper due by 11:00 am.
May 1	One-page response to professor's comments due by 11:00 am.
May 7	Final exam 10:05- 12:05 pm.

Participation

Discussions are essential to examining the historical, substantive, and cultural complexity of race, medicine and public health. There will be new material presented in class, as well as the opportunity to engage with images and texts—both primary and secondary. This approach requires that you do the reading before class, that you attend class with the goal of raising questions, offering comments, or responding to the readings and the issues they raise. As we are all well aware, ideas about race and assumptions about racial differences are not now nor have they ever been neutral issues; they continue to provoke controversy and discussion. The operating assumption is that we will all benefit from the expression of thoughtful perspectives, ideas, and informed opinions of all students. I encourage students to adopt the following norms for discussion:

- Presume positive intentions from your colleagues
- Engage respectfully
- Provide evidence and comments from the texts we are reading when possible.

The participation grade will be determined based on attendance and the student's active and meaningful participation during class discussions. I will provide a mid-term assessment to all students about their participation. You are also welcome, at any time, to discuss this requirement (and any others) with the professor to learn more. I will make every effort to start class on time and to end on time.

Policy on class attendance:

Students are required to attend class, to complete the reading assignments listed on the course outline in time for class discussions of the material, and to do the quizzes, exams, and paper. As the course instructor, I consider your health and safety to be a top priority. Please do not come to class if you are not feeling well. I will work with you to provide reasonable accommodations in the event of an emergency, personal illness, or loss of a loved one. As a student, you have the right to personal privacy regarding your health. If you will miss class due a religious observance, please let me know and we will find an alternate date/time for you to make-up a scheduled exam.

Email policy:

I welcome email communications. But please do not expect immediate responses. I will do my best to return any email messages within 24 hours on weekdays and by Monday for emails sent on Friday afternoon or over the weekend. All students need to ensure that the email address listed for them is accurate and current. Do check the website for basic course information and copies of handouts before emailing me with routine questions.

Canvas Website: The course website is a vital component of the class. It contains the readings for the class meetings and other information for the class. All the course readings are posted to the CANVAS site.

Privacy of Student Records and Usage of Audio Recorded Lectures

Please note that lecture materials and recordings for this class are protected intellectual property at UW- Madison. Students in this course may use the materials and recordings for their personal use related to participation in this class. Students may also take notes solely for their personal use. If a lecture is not already recorded, you are not authorized to record my lectures without my permission unless you are considered by the university to be a qualified student with a disability requiring accommodation. [Regent Policy Document 4- 1] Students may not copy or have lecture materials and recordings outside of class, including posting on internet sites or selling to commercial entities. Students are also prohibited from providing or selling their personal notes to anyone else or being paid for taking notes by any person or commercial firm without the instructor's express written permission. Unauthorized use of these copyrighted lecture materials and recordings constitutes copyright infringement and may be addressed under the university's policies, UWS Chapters 14 and 17, governing student academic and non-academic misconduct. For more information, see [Privacy of Student Records & Use of Audio Recorded Lectures](#).

Electronic Etiquette Policy

Students may use alaptops to take notes. Other uses of laptops, tablets, e-readers, or phones (except during emergencies) during class meetings are not permitted.

(If learning accommodations are required, please see me.). Surfing the internet and/or text messaging during class will be considered distractions to the instructor and fellow students and will adversely affect your participation grade.

No audio or video recording of any presentation or class activity is permitted without the instructor prior written approval.

Class Policies Regarding Written Work and Plagiarism

In addition to the University's policies governing Academic Honesty and Misconduct (see below), this course requires you to observe a set of specific class policies regarding your written work. This means that grade penalties can be imposed for failing to comply with these policies, even if the matter is not reported to the Dean as an official case of academic dishonesty or misconduct. In that regard, these specific class policies regarding written work function like this course's attendance policy: If you fail to comply with the policy, your grade can and will be lowered by the instructor.

The class policies regarding written work that you must follow are contained in the document from the University's Writing Center linked to at the end of this section. The purpose of these policies is to ensure that students receive credit solely where credit is due to them. Any words, phrases, or ideas that are borrowed from another source, any other source, must be properly acknowledged and cited, even if paraphrased. Specific class assignments may contain additional rules and guidelines for citation, but at the very least the rules and guidelines to avoid plagiarism as set out in the Writing Center's website here: <https://writing.wisc.edu/handbook/documentation/>

Policy on the use of Artificial Intelligence (Chat GPT)

To put it simply, you may not use AI-generated responses (such as those by Chat GPT, Bard, or other bots) and present it as your own work. I also strongly discourage you to use AI to look for historical information related to this course (Like many professors, I have run questions for essays and quizzes on available platforms. The bots' answers, not surprisingly, are not always accurate, and when a bot does not know something, it will make up information.). For this reason, I will consider using ChatGPT or other AI programs to assist you in drafting your work and essays (including online assignments of any length) to be academic misconduct in this class.

Stated Course Policies are non-exhaustive

The course policies stated in this syllabus are not necessarily exhaustive. I reserve the right to impose additional or amended policies as circumstances warrant. Any change will be announced both in class and on the course CANVAS website.

Academic Honesty and Misconduct

Students who submit papers not in compliance with the UW rules governing academic honesty and plagiarism (which you can find here

<https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/academic-misconduct/> and here https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin_code/uws/14.pdf) will receive an F. Ignorance of what counts as academic misconduct or plagiarism is not an acceptable defense. All cases of Academic Dishonesty and Misconduct are reported to the Dean of Students.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:

This course abides by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA is a federal antidiscrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a documented disability and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please contact me as soon as possible so that I can make every reasonable effort to provide adequate accommodation.

Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world. <https://diversity.wisc.edu>.

TOPIC OUTLINE for 523

I.	Jan 21	Introductions and Expectations
II.	Jan 23	Smallpox, Race, and Medical Innovation
III.	Jan 28	Racial Ideas and the Founding Fathers
IV.	Jan 30	Scenes of Melancholy Devastation
V.	Feb 4	Healing Sickness on Southern Plantations
VI.	Feb 6	Experimenting on the Enslaved
VII.	Feb 11	Legacies of Slavery
VIII.	Feb 13	Reconstructing Health
IX.	Feb 18	Strangers from Another Shore
X.	Feb 20	“the Wretched Refuse of your Teeming Shore”
XI.	Feb 25	American Empires
XII.	Feb 27	In-class Midterm Exam
XIII.	March 4	Medicalizing the Mexicans
XIV.	March 6	Native American Health
XV.	March 11	Building Black Hospitals

XVI.	March 13	Educating African American Physicians
XVII.	March 18	Red, White and Black
XVIII.	March 20	The Tuskegee Syphilis Study

March 22-30**Spring Break**

XIX.	April 1	Fighting Medical Discrimination
XX.	April 3	Genetic Medicine— Tay Sachs Disease
XXI.	April 8	Genetic Medicine— Cystic Fibrosis
XXII.	April 10	Genetic Medicine—Sickle Cell Anemia
XXIII.	April 15	Reproduction and Race
XXIV.	April 17	Chemo-Policing
XXV.	April 22	Racing Plastic Surgery
XXVI.	April 24	Affirmative Actions
XXVII.	April 29	What to do with the Past?
XXVIII.	May 1	Conclusions
	Final Exam	May 7, 10 am to 12:05 pm.

Reading Assignments**January 21 Introductions and Expectations****January 23 Smallpox, Race, and Medical Innovation**

Readings:

Margot Minardi, "The Boston Inoculation Controversy of 1721-1722: An Incident in the History of Race," *William and Mary Quarterly* (2004): 47-76.

Roslyn Stone Wolman, "A tale of two colonial cities: inoculation against smallpox in Philadelphia and in Boston." *Trans.Stud.College of Physicians of Philadelphia* (1978): 338-347.

John Adams to Abigail Smith, April 26, 1764. Letter.

January 28 Racial Ideas and the Founding Fathers

Readings:

Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (Query XIV).

Benjamin Rush, "Observations Intended to Favour a Supposition That the Black Color (As It Is Called) of the Negroes is The Leprosy," *Trans. American Philosophical Society* (1799): 289-97.

January 30 Scenes of Melancholy Devastation

Readings:

Matthew Carey, *A Short Account of the Malignant Fever. . .* (1793), Chapter XIII (2 p).

Absalom Jones and Richard Allen, *A Narrative of the Proceedings of the Colored People During the Awful Calamity in Philadelphia in the Year 1793; and a Refutation of Some Censures Thrown upon Them in Some Publications*.

Elizabeth Drinker, *The Diary of Elizabeth Drinker*, August 1793, 111-121.

February 4 Healing Sickness on Southern Plantations

Readings:

Sharla M. Fett, Chapters 1 ("Soundness") and 2 ("Spirit and Power") from *Working Cures: Healing, Health and Power on Southern Slave Plantations* (2002), 17-59.

February 6 Experimenting on the Enslaved

Readings:

J. Marion Sims, "Osteosarcoma of the Lower Jaw," *New Orleans Med. & Surg. J.* (1846), 126-29.

J. Marion Sims, chapter XIV and F. Lee Buxton, "Foreword," *The Story of My Life* (1884; 1968), v-xi; 222-46.

February 11 Legacies of Slavery

Readings:

Jay S. Kaufman and Susan A. Hall, "The slavery hypertension hypothesis: dissemination and appeal of a modern race theory," *Epidemiology* 14 (2003), 111-18.

Deirdre Cooper Owens and Sharla M. Fett. "Black maternal and infant health: historical legacies of slavery." *American journal of public health* (2019): 1342-45.

Hogarth, Rana Asali. "The myth of innate racial differences between white and black people's bodies: lessons from the 1793 yellow fever epidemic in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania." *American Journal of Public Health* (2019): 1339-1341.

February 13 Reconstructing Health

Readings:

Edward Mayfield Boyle, "A Comparative Physical Study of the Negro," *Journal of the National Medical Association* (1912): 124-130.

Leslie A. Schwalm, "Surviving Wartime Emancipation: African Americans and the Cost of Civil War," *Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics* (2011): 21-28.

Stephen C. Kenny, "Capturing Racial Pathology: American Medical Photography in the Era of Jim Crow," *American journal of public health* (2020): 75-83.

February 18 Strangers from Another Shore

Readings:

I.E. Cohn, "The Chinese and their Peculiar Medical Ideas," *Medical Record* (1892): 477-78.

Nayan Shah, "Plague and Managing the Commercial City," from *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (2001): 120-57.

February 20 "the Wretched Refuse of your Teeming Shore"

Readings:

C. P. Knight, "Detection of the Mentally Defective Among Immigrants," *JAMA* (1913): 106-07.

Anne-Emanuelle Birn, "Six Seconds Per Eyelid: The Medical Inspection of Immigrants at Ellis Island, 1892-1914." *Dynamis* (1997): 81-316.

February 25 American Empires

Readings:

Susan E. Lederer, "'Porto Ricochet': Joking about Germs, Cancer, and Race Extermination in the 1930s," *American Literary History* (2002), 720-46.

February 27 In-class Midterm Examination

March 4 Medicalizing the Mexicans

Readings:

J. Colbert, "Hookworm Disease among Mexican track laborers," *Calif State J of Med* (1911).

Benjamin Goldberg, "Tuberculosis in Racial Types with Special References to Mexicans," *American Journal of Public Health* (1929): 274-84.

Natalia Molina, "Borders, Laborers, and Racialized Medicalization: Mexican Immigration and US Public Health Practices in the 20th Century," *American Journal of Public Health* (June 2011): 1024-1031

March 6 Native American Health

Readings:

Bryan Rindfleisch, "'A very considerable mortality:' Federal Indian Policy at the Hayward Indian School and Lac Courte Oreilles Reservation," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* (2011): 2-13.

View short film *Another to Conquer* (1941) intended for indigenous audiences
22 minutes.

Available at <https://medicineonscreen.nlm.nih.gov/portfolio/another-to-conquer/>

March 11 Building Black Hospitals

Readings:

Walter White, "Death of a Citizen," from *A Man Called White*, 134-38.

Vanessa Northington Gamble, "There wasn't a lot of comforts in those days:" African Americans, public health, and the 1918 influenza epidemic," *Public Health Reports* (2010): 113-122.

March 13 Educating African American Doctors

Readings:

W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Health and Physique of the Negro American* (1906): 93-105.

Abraham Flexner, "The Medical Education of the Negro," *Report on Medical Education* (1910): 180-182; 317-319.

Spencie Love, "Noted Physician Fatally Injured: Charles Drew and the Legend that Will Not Die," *Washington History* (1992): 4-19.

March 18 Red, White and Black

Readings:

S.E. Lederer, "Lost Boundaries: Race, Blood and Bodies" in *Flesh and Blood: Organ Transplantation and Blood Transfusion in Twentieth-Century America* (2008),

Ephemera. White Citizens Council, Mississippi, c. 1950s.

March 20 The Tuskegee Syphilis Study

Readings:

Eunice Rivers, S. H. Schuman, L Simpson, Sidney Olansky, "Twenty years of followup experience in a long-range medical study," *Public Health Reports* 1953: 391-??.

Susan Lederer, "The Tuskegee Syphilis Study in the Context of American Medical Research," in *Tuskegee's Truths: The Tuskegee Syphilis Study*, 2012: 266-275.

Thomas Frieden and Francis Collins, "Intentional Infection of Vulnerable Populations in 1946-1948: Another Tragic History Lesson," *JAMA* (2010): 2063-64.

March 22-30 Spring Break

April 1 Fighting Medical Discrimination

Reading:

Alondra Nelson, "The People's Free Medical Clinics," in *Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight Against Medical Discrimination* (2011): 114-140.

April 3 Genetic Medicine—Tay Sachs Disease

Readings:

Wailoo and Pemberton, *Troubled Dream of Genetic Medicine*, intro, chapter 1.

April 8 Genetic Medicine—Cystic Fibrosis

Readings:

Wailoo and Pemberton, *Troubled Dream of Genetic Medicine*, chapter 2.

April 10 Genetic Medicine—Sickle Cell Anemia

Readings:

Wailoo and Pemberton, *Troubled Dream of Genetic Medicine*, chapter 3 and conclusion.

April 15 Reproduction and Race

Readings:

Dána-Ain Davis, "Reproducing while Black: The crisis of Black maternal health, obstetric racism and assisted reproductive technology." *Reproductive Biomedicine & Society Online* 11 (2020): 56-64.

John Hoberman, "The Role of Racial Folklore in Obstetrics and Gynecology during the Twentieth Century," in her *Black and blue: The origins and consequences of medical racism* (2012): 139-145, 261-2.

April 17 Chemo-Policing

Readings:

Terence Keel and Jonah Walters. "Oleoresin Capsicum: The Racial-Political History of a Ubiquitous Chemical Munition," *Isis* (2023): 687-709.

April 22 Racializing Surgery

Readings:

Alicia Ouellette, "Eyes wide open: surgery to westernize the eyes of an Asian child," *Hastings Center Report* (2009): 15-18.

April 24 Affirmative Actions

Readings:

David J. Bodenhamer, "Allan P. Bakke, The Problem of Affirmative Action," in *100 Americans Making Constitutional History: A Biographical History* (2012), 6 pages.

R. F. Baugh, "I am an African American: Distinguishing between African American and African applicants in medical school admissions matters," *Acad Med* 93 (2018): 1281-85.

April 29 What to do with the Past?

Readings:

Robert B. Baker, Harriet A. Washington, Ololade Olakanmi, Todd L. Savitt, Elizabeth A. Jacobs, Eddie Hoover, and Matthew K. Wynia, "African American physicians and organized medicine, 1846-1968," *JAMA* 374 (2008): 306-13.

Paul-Emile Kimani, Alexander K. Smith, Bernard Lo, and Alicia Fernández, "Dealing with Racist Patients," *N Engl J Med* (2016): 708- 11.

Kimberly L. Reynolds, John D. Cowden, Jeffrey P. Brosco, and John D. Lantos. "When a family requests a white doctor," *Pediatrics* (2015): 381-86.

May 1 Conclusions

May 7 Final Exam