Course summary:

This seven-week course focuses on the recent developments in genetics and how they shape, and conversely are shaped by, society. Topics include three of the most important social aspects of genomic research over the past thirty years: genetic privacy, race and genomics, and the effects on gene patenting on research. Who has access to your genetic information? Can your genetic information be sold to big pharma if your name is removed from the sample? How has the patenting of human genes reshaped the conduct of scientific research? How are molecular biology and pharmaceutical and biotech firms simultaneously challenging and reifying notions of race in the age of biocapitalism? Can one’s race be identified at the level of the gene? If so, what are the socio-cultural implications? Indeed, if not, what are the consequences? This course aims at drawing attention to the ethical, legal, and social issues generated by molecular biology from the 1980s to the present. Readings will include works from historians of science Kevles and Jackson, and sociologists and anthropologists of medicine, Duster, Fullwiley, Morning, Kevles, and Jackson.

The papers are due at the beginning of the class as listed in the syllabus. Late papers, which are not accompanied by a physician’s note, will not be accepted, and you will reserve a 0 (zero) for that assignment. Also note that it is neither in your interest nor mine for you to ask for an incomplete; however, if there is a family emergency, or you have been ill, we can certainly discuss the possibility of you receiving an incomplete.

Note on plagiarism: “As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website [www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html] for a full description of the academic integrity policy.”
Goals:

1) To understand the historical relationships between the socio-cultural context and genetics
2) To appreciate the social, economic, political, and ethical implications of genetics
3) To read critically and carefully primary and secondary literature
4) To develop writing skills relevant to the socio-cultural and political aspects of genetics
5) To gain an in-depth understanding of the interactions between biomedical/genetic research and society, including how genomics has challenged ethical, social, and cultural norms over the past 30 years.
6) To learn how to argue persuasively in an interdisciplinary context in both written and oral form.

Week 1:

Wednesday, 2 September: Introduction and Course Mechanics and Requirements

Monday: 7, September: No Class, Labor Day

Week 2:


Monday (14 September): The Human Genome Project I. Introduction to the history of the project. Reading: Hood and Kevles, The Code of Codes (T), Chapters 1, 3, and 5 and Davies, Cracking the Genome (T), chapters 3 and 4.

Week 3:

Wednesday (16 September): Human Genome Project II. Genetic Essentialism and Genetic Privacy. Reading: Hood and Kevles, eds., The Code of Codes (T), Chapters 8, 9, 11, 12 and 13.

Monday: (21 September): Student Debate. The HGP Project is a kinder, gentler form of eugenics.

Week 4:


Week 5:


Paper One due in class today. Is race a useful category for understanding human diversity? Why or why not? OR How is the HGP different from the eugenics movement?

Week 6:


N.B.: NO CLASS MONDAY, 12 OCTOBER!

Week 7:


Week 8:

Wednesday (21 October): Course Conclusion and Evaluation. **Papers Two Due in Class on Monday, 26 October.** How has gene patenting changed older, classical notions about science and its conduct?

OFFICE HOURS AND RELEVANT INFORMATION:

Myles W. Jackson, Ph.D., Albert Gallatin Research Excellence Professor of the History of Science, NYU-Gallatin and Professor of History, NYU-Faculty of Arts and Science; and Director of Science and Society, NYU-CAS

Office Hours: Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays from 3:30-5 pm, or by appointment, 405 Gallatin, x88488, [myles.jackson@nyu.edu](mailto:myles.jackson@nyu.edu)

EXPLANATION of GRADE DETERMINATION:

2 papers (5 pages each), 35% each totaling: 70%, class participation 30 %

Required books, designated by (T) throughout the syllabus, are all available at the NYU Bookstore on two-hour reserve in Bobst, [http://bit.ly/1E5q0kI](http://bit.ly/1E5q0kI):


