A table from *Types of Mankind*, by Josiah Clark Nott and George Robert Gliddon, 1854

Dr. Brendan Matz  
Email: bm1589@nyu.edu  
Phone: 917-770-3290  
Office: 613 1 Washington Place  
Office hours: Friday, 9:00 AM-10:45 AM
**Course Description:**

This course examines the history of the concept of race as it relates to the development of both colonialism and modern biological science. We will examine how and why popular notions and systematic theories of racial difference took shape and changed over time and how those ideas were put to use or expressed in various colonial contexts. The approach of the course is comparative, with a focus on Britain, France, Germany, and the United States, and the material is divided into three sections. In the first section, we will look at early European encounters with human difference in the New World, Asia, and Africa and trace how colonial exploration and exchange helped lay the foundations for race science. The second section considers the development of scientific racism from the appearance of Darwin’s theory of evolution to World War II and the Holocaust. The final section examines postwar reappraisals of the race concept and the process of decolonization, as well as a series of unresolved questions about the meanings of race in our contemporary global culture.

**Course Objectives:**

* Gain a solid grasp of the content of the history of science, technology, and medicine as it relates to the course topic.
* Gain a solid grasp of the content of the history of European and American colonialism.
* Hone skills in thinking historically. Emphasis will be placed on the following: change over time (and continuity), causality, context, contingency, and complexity.
* Refine writing and oral presentation skills through critical engagement with various types of scholarly evidence.
* Develop the ability to analyze and debate contemporary issues through the lens of the past. This objective will require students to think along interdisciplinary as well as strictly historical lines.

**Course Structure and Readings:**

The class time will be structured around in-class discussion and writing assignments, small group activities, and oral presentations. Readings, films, and/or material from the Internet will be assigned for each class, and I will provide additional background information and context to facilitate productive discussion.

Many of the readings will be uploaded to NYU Classes as PDFs or will be available online. However, the following texts are required:


These books will be available for purchase at the NYU bookstore and will be on hold at the Bobst Library Reserve Desk.
**Course Requirements:**

Students are expected to read, listen to, or view all the assigned material before the class meeting. Attendance and participation in discussion is mandatory. To facilitate class discussion, students will be asked to prepare reading responses before or in class, provide brief oral presentations, or respond to a discussion thread on NYU Classes. Attendance, discussion, and short assignments based on the course materials will constitute the total participation grade for the course. This grade is 20% of the final grade.

Participants in the class are required to submit 3 writing assignments. The first of these, a 5-page paper on the early history of the concept of race, will constitute 20% of the final grade. The second, a 5-page paper analyzing primary sources, will constitute 25% of the final grade. The third paper can be either a critique/analysis of the Spitzer Hall of Human Origins at the American Museum of Natural History, a position paper on a contemporary debate related to science, medicine, and race, or a detailed proposal for a public history project that explores race, science, and colonialism. We will be visiting the AMNH as a group and taking a tour. This 7-page paper will constitute 35% of the final grade. Additional instructions for each of these assignments, including grading rubrics, will be included in separate handouts.

To summarize, your final grade will be calculated based on the following:

- Class participation (including attendance, discussion, and short assignments): 20%
- Paper 1: 20%
- Paper 2: 25%
- Paper 3: 35%

**Policies:**

Class attendance and active participation in discussion is expected. Excessive absenteeism and/or failure to engage with the assigned reading material will have a negative impact on the class participation portion of your grade. Students who miss more than 2 classes without a valid excuse will be required to meet with me. It is possible that you will then be given a failing grade for class participation. Papers must be submitted on time. Unless you have spoken to me in advance about an extension, I will deduct 10 points for each day the paper is late.

Please be courteous to your fellow students and me by putting your phone on vibrate and refraining from talking privately. Also, please arrive on time and remain for the duration of the class. Arriving more than 15 minutes late for class will constitute an absence.

While I do not prohibit the use of laptops and tablets, I expect that you use them to facilitate active participation in the course.
If you are a student with a disability who is requesting accommodations, please contact New York University’s Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu. You must be registered with CSD to receive accommodations. Information about the Moses Center can be found at www.nyu.edu/csd. The Moses Center is located at 726 Broadway on the 2nd floor.

**ACADEMIC DISHONESTY**

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](http://www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html)

**COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS**

1/30, Introduction and Overview of Course


**Browse the “Race: Are We So Different?” website,**
[http://www.understandingrace.org/home.html](http://www.understandingrace.org/home.html)

**Browse the “Is Race Real?” web forum,**

2/6, Europe Encounters Human Difference


2/13, Race and the Enlightenment

*Nicholas Hudson, “From ‘Nation’ to ‘Race’: The Origin of Racial Classification in


**2/20, The Establishment of Racial Typologies in America**


*Samuel Morton, *Crania Americana* (1839), Selections.

**2/27, European Ethnology on the Eve of Evolution**


**Browse and skim John van Wyhe’s “History of Phrenology on the Web,”
  http://www.historyofphrenology.org.uk/**

**3/6, Making Sense of “Colonial Science”**


***First Essay Due
***Oral Presentations Group A

**3/13, Charles Darwin, Evolution, and Race**


*Bernasconi and Lott eds., *The Idea of Race*, 54-78.

**Browse and skim the module on “Race, Civilization, and Progress” available at the Darwin Correspondence Project Website,
  http://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/race-civilization-and-progress**
3/20, Spring Recess, No Class

3/27, Social Darwinism and the Rise of Anglo-American Eugenics


**Browse and skim the Image Archive of the American Eugenics Movement,**

4/3, Scientific Racism and Imperialism


4/10, Race, Gender, and Colonial Medicine


***Second Essay Due
***Oral Presentations Group B

4/17, German Racial Ideologies


**Browse and skim the “Chronicle” section of the Cold Spring Harbor DNA Interactive website,**
[http://www.dnai.org/e/index.html](http://www.dnai.org/e/index.html)

**Watch the short film *The Path to Nazi Genocide* (2014),
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sRcNq4OYTyE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sRcNq4OYTyE)

4/24, Rethinking Race in the Postwar Years

5/1, Recent History and Contemporary Issues


**Visit and browse the websites associated with the PBS shows *African American Lives* and *African American Lives II*: http://www.pbs.org/wnet/aalives/2006/index.html; and http://www.pbs.org/wnet/aalives/

5/8, Science and Race in the 21st Century


**Return to the “Race: Are We So Different?” website for a reconsideration of the project, http://www.understandingrace.org/home.html

***Final Paper Due