

## Race, Medicine and the Roots of Health Disparities

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### Course Description

The COVID-19 pandemic has drawn renewed attention to racial health disparities. However, such disparities are not new and stem from a confluence of social, political, economic, and environmental factors. This course will use the tools of history to explore how racial health disparities have been understood, why they persist, and how we might better address these health care inequities. In doing so, it will examine the shifting ways racial categories have been used to differentiate bodies; explain, diagnose, and treat disease; and shape the American medical profession.

### Learning Objectives

1. Understand how the concept of race has been framed and used in medical science and practice
2. Understand how ideas about race have impacted medical education and the medical profession
3. Identify the historical factors that have shaped racial health disparities in the US

### Course Calendar

#### Week 1: Racializing Bodies

*Readings:* Selections from Hippocrates, *On Airs, Waters, and Places* (c. 400 BCE); B. Rush, *Observations intended to favour a supposition that the black color (as it is called) of the Negroes is derived from the leprosy* (1760-1813); M. Rich, "The curse of civilised woman: race, gender and the pain of childbirth in nineteenth-century American medicine" (2016).

#### Week 2: Defining Race and Disease

*Readings:* Selections from K. Wailoo, "Stigma, race, and disease in 20<sup>th</sup> century America," *Lancet* (2006); K. Wailoo, *How Cancer Crossed the Color Line* (2011); C. McMillen, "Indigenous Peoples, tuberculosis research and changing ideas about race in the 1930s," *CMAJ* (2021).

#### Week 3: Race in Diagnosis and Therapeutics

*Readings:* L. Braun, "Race, ethnicity and lung function: A brief history," *CJRT* (2015); S. Soo-Jin Lee, "Waiting on the promise of prescribing precision: Race in the era of pharmacogenomics," *The Unsettled Past: The Collision of DNA, Race and History* (2013).

#### Week 4: Race and Medical Research

*Readings:* Selections from S. Reverby, ed., *Tuskegee's Truths: Rethinking the Tuskegee Syphilis Study* (2000); S. Epstein, *Inclusion: The Politics of Difference in Medical Research* (2010).

#### Week 5: Race and the Medical Profession

##### **Guest Lecture: Dr. Michelle Williams, PhD, RN (Cedars-Sinai)**

*Readings:* I. Vandervall, "Some problems of the colored woman physician," *The Woman's Medical Journal* (1917); D. Wilson, "Minorities and the medical profession: A historical perspective and analysis of current and future trends," *Journal of the National Medical Association* (1986); V.N. Gamble, "'Sisters of a darker race': African American graduates of the Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania, 1867-1925," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* (2021).

#### Week 6: Race, Risk, and Health Disparities

##### **Guest Lecture: Dr. Jennifer Harris, MD (Cedars-Sinai)**

*Readings:* A. Nuruddin, G. Mooney, and A. White, "The art of medicine: reckoning with histories of medical racism and violence in the USA," *Lancet* (2020); D. Vyas, L. Eisenstein, and D. Jones, "Hidden in plain sight—Reconsidering the use of race correction in clinical algorithms," *NEJM* (2020).

**[Syllabus subject to change]**