Controversy and Behavior Genetics
UCLA Center for Society and Genetics

Course Number: Soc Gen 188 Sem 2
Winter Quarter 2009
Mondays, 2-4:50pm
Location: Royce 148

Instructor
Aaron Panofsky
Assistant Professor
Public Policy and Center for Society and Genetics

Office: 6355 Public Affairs Building or 1317 Rolfe Hall
Phone: 310-825-0462 (50462 on campus)
Email: apanofsky@socgen.ucla.edu

Office hours: Tuesdays 2-4pm, 1317 Rolfe Hall

Course description
Behavior genetics is the quintessentially controversial science. In part this is due to its subject matter, finding genetic links to intelligence, personality, mental illness, and criminality among many other traits, and the questions it raises—or seems to raise—about differences between individuals, men and women, or racial groups, and what social policies might do about those differences. Some see behavior genetics as eugenics and biological determinism by another name. Others see it as ordinary science battered by a chaotic and politicized culture. This course aims to analyze behavior genetics using the tools of critical sociology and history to understand the roots and causes of controversy, as well as its effects on the scientific field’s development. We will consider this problem from three basic directions. First, we will examine some of its basic methods and claims and criticisms of both to understand the scientific differences between behavior geneticists and their critics. Second, we will consider the history and sociology of behavior genetics as a group or community of scientists, to understand the causes and consequences of its distinctive social organization. Finally, we will examine the public reception of behavior genetics and different opinions about its social and policy implications.

Reading materials and course website
The following required books have been ordered at Ackerman Bookstore.


Many of the readings for this class will be book chapters or articles. A reading packet has been prepared and is also available at Ackerman Bookstore.

Copies of the books and the reading packet will also be placed on reserve at the College Library

**Course expectations, attendance, participation, and grading**

The following factors will determine your grade:

- Participation: 10%
- Response papers: 30%
- Media paper: 30%
- Final exam: 30%

All assignments must be completed on the date specified in the syllabus. These dates are intended to give you plenty of notice so you can plan your work-schedule in advance. Therefore a work required from another class or a last minute illness are not a valid excuse for failing to turn in an assignment. Late assignments will not be accepted without an official excuse from the Dean of Students—a doctor’s note alone won’t cut it.

**Participation**

This course is a limited enrollment seminar—an opportunity for undergraduates to learn in a collaborative environment where everyone’s contributions are necessary and their ideas are taken seriously. The success of the seminar is dependent on the active participation of all class members. This means that, in addition to completing assignments on time, students must 1) attend all classes on time, 2) do all required readings, 3) participate in class discussions. Your participation grade will be determined based on your meeting these requirements satisfactorily.

**Response Papers**

Writing is perhaps the best way to deeply engage a set of ideas and to develop one’s skills as a creative and independent thinker. Towards these ends, students in this class will write four short response papers to the readings in the class.

The response papers should be *two to three pages long* and should try to address *all the readings* for a given day either by treating them each in turn or by discussing a theme common to them all. The style should be informal, and it is not necessary to include citations or a bibliography. The aim is for you to critically analyze the texts and express your opinions about them.

I will break up the class into two groups, A and B, which will be responsible for response papers in alternating classes. The reading schedule tells you which group is assigned to which day. Each student will turn in *four* response papers. These will be due via Turnitin (on your my.ucla.edu page) by **11am on the day of class**. This will allow me to read your responses and address them during class time. Because I will use them to prepare our seminar discussions, **you cannot make up missed response papers.**
Topics
You may wonder what to write about. After a couple of weeks, this won’t be a problem for you, but to get you started here are some suggested “topics” for journal entries:

• Give a critical summary of the readings highlighting intellectual problems or implications they set up.
• Write about how the readings relate to the class discussion, previous readings, or other things you’ve read
• Write about why you loved or hated the readings—but your reasons should be analytical, not objections to their style or difficulty
• List problems or questions you had with the text, then “write through” them by exploring possible responses or answers

Don’t write the same thing (e.g., a summary) for each memo; be a little creative.

Evaluation
These papers are mainly supposed to get you to engage the texts more deeply. However, I will collect and read them. They’ll be evaluated as follows

√ Meets expectations, meets the length requirement (without “filling up space”) and shows a good effort to use the response paper to engage all the texts intelligently

√- Falls short of expectations, the response is less than two pages, doesn’t discuss all the readings, or it is irrelevant, haphazard, or just filling up space

√+ Exceeds expectations, the response is longer than required and demonstrates a genuine effort to address the text carefully, critically, and creatively

At the end of the semester I’ll tally up the checks you get and “average” them. To give you an idea: all check pluses would be a high A (about 96%), all checks would be an A-/B+ (90%), all check minuses would be a low B or B- (about 84 or 83%).

Media Paper
This will be a short paper (6-7 pages) about how behavior genetics claims appear in the media. I will hand out a detailed assignment on Week 6, it will be due on Week 8.

Final Exam
There will be a final exam consisting of short answers and essays at the designated time during finals week.

Class and reading schedule
Week 1, January 5—Introduction

Horgan, “Do Our Genes Influence Behavior?”
Week 2, January 12—The Controversial Science of Behavior Genetics

Scarr, "Three Cheers for Behavior Genetics"

S. Rose, "The Rise of Neurogenetic Determinism"

Turkheimer, “Mobiles: A Gloomy View of Research into Complex Human Traits.”

Kaplan, “Genes and Causation” and “The Concept of the Environment” (Chapters 3 and 10 in Limits and Lies)

Panofsky, “Faith, Hope, and Fear in the Science of Behavior Genetics”

*Group A Response Paper due*

Week 3—Case 1: Intelligence and racial differences

January 19, Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday, **CLASS RESCHEDULED**

**New date and time: Friday, January 23, Noon, Rolfe 1323**

Rushton and Jensen, “Thirty Years of Research on Race Differences in Cognitive Ability”

Gottfredson, “What if the Hereditarian Hypothesis is True?”

Nisbet, “Heredity, Environment, and Race Differences in IQ”

Kaplan, “IQ and Social Policy” (Chapter 4 in Limits and Lies)

Lewontin, “Of Genes and Genitals”

*Group B Response Paper due*

Week 4, January 26—Case 2: Homosexuality

Hamer and Copeland, *The Science of Desire* (Selections)


Kaplan, “Gay Genes and the Reification of Homosexuality” (Chapter 6 in Limits and Lies)


*Group A Response Paper due*
Week 5, February 2—Explaining Controversy 1: Politics and History

Nelkin and Lindee, “Powers of the Gene” and “The Eugenic Gene” (Chapters 1 and 2 in *DNA Mystique*)

Paul, “A Debate that Refuses to Die”


Harwood, “The Race-Intelligence Controversy…”

Linda Gottfredson, “Egalitarian Fiction and Collective Fraud”

*Group B Response Paper due*

Week 6, February 9—Explaining Controversy 2: Popular Culture and the Media

Nelkin and Lindee, “Elvis’s DNA” and “Creating Natural Distinctions” (Chapters 5 and 6 in *DNA Mystique*)

Miller, “Introducing the ‘Gay Gene’: Media and Scientific Representations”

Naurekas, “Racism Resurgent”

Snyderman and Rothman, “No News is Good News: The Nature of News Media Coverage”

Conrad, “Genetics and Behavior in the News: Dilemmas of a Rising Paradigm”

*Media Paper assignment handed out*

*Group A Response Paper due*

Week 7, February 16, Presidents’ Day Holiday, NO CLASS

No readings, work on Media Paper assignment

Week 8, February 23—Explaining Controversy 3: Field Formation and Scientific Authority

Panofsky, “The Inside Out Field”—To Be Distributed

Panofsky, “Rethinking Scientific Authority”

*Media Paper assignment due*

*Group B Response Paper due*
Week 9, March 2—Policy Implications 1: Politics of Retrenchment

Nelkin and Lindee, “Absolutism...,” “Genetic Essentialism Applied,” and “Genetic Futurism” (Chapters 7, 8, and 9 in DNA Mystique)

Alper and Beckwith, “Genetic Fatalism and Social Policy”

Rowe, “Why Families Have Little Influence: Social and Policy Implications”

Seligman, “A Substantial Inheritance”

Manzi, “Undetermined”

Group A Response Paper due

Week 10, March 9—Policy Implications 2: Transforming Social Relationships

Kaplan, “Contract Pregnancies and Genetic Parenthood” (Chapter 9 in Limits and Lies)

N. Rose, “At Genetic Risk” and “The Biology of Control”

Panofsky, “Behavior Genetics and the Prospect of ‘Personalized Social Policy’”—To Be Distributed

Group B Response Paper due

Week 11, Final Exam