Why do we continue to believe that phenotype (or skin color, hair type) can tell us anything about intelligence, athletic ability or violent behavior?

How can scientists think responsibly and ethically about human difference?

Tracing the concept of race back to eighteenth century Europe; this course explores how societies have thought about human difference. How have we come to live in a society where people are arbitrarily consigned to racial groups? We will consider the role played by the human and natural sciences in the production and reification of race as a category of social differences and in particular we will explore how scientists and doctors are central to the histories of race. Students will reflect on how empire contributed to the production of ideologies of scientific racism, which was then used to justify economic appropriation, violence, mass displacement and loss of sovereignty. Using films, documentaries, novels and more traditional academic materials, students are taken through case studies on race and science. We will also reflect on the modern avatars of historical relationships and connections.

CASE STUDIES WILL INCLUDE
- Science and Slavery: Producing and Reproducing Slave Labor in the Americas
- Human Zoos: From Saartje Baartman to Ota Benga
- Voodoo, Zombies and Anthropology in 19th century Haiti
- Sex and Sexuality in the Encounter between Native Americans and Europeans.
- Race and Intelligence: Are some groups really smarter than others?
- Race and Sports: Are some groups more athletic? More ‘warrior-like’?
- American and German Eugenics and the Holocaust