

Understanding our eugenic past: What became of eugenics course offerings?

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Population/human genetics roots in eugenics

STATISTICAL STUDIES IN GENETICS AND HUMAN INHERITANCE ANNALS OF EUGENICS

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In 1954 “The Annals
of Eugenics,”
established by Karl
Pearson, switched
to its current name
“The Annals of
Human Genetics.”



Technical eugenics classes were common in
university classrooms. How did that change?

Eugenics was taught at SFSU from 1926 until 1951.

Zool. 103. Eugenics (3)

A study of the facts and problems of human heredity and the possibilities of race betterment.

Prerequisite: B.S. 6, Bot. 11A, or Zool. 1A.

Starting in 1952, Human Genetics was offered.

Graduate

203. Human Genetics (3)

Principles of inheritance as applied to man; the role of heredity and environment; population genetics. Prerequisite: Biology 10, or Biology 15, or Botany 11, or Zoology 11, or equivalent, and consent of instructor.

Spring, Odd Years

We've shown that eugenics curriculum continued well past the end of WWII, and is connected to modern course offerings. It is eugenic reasoning about the differential value of lives that has brought us to our position where health and economic stability are so much more precarious for poor people, people with disabilities, Black and Indigenous people, transgender people. In this moment, when ventilators and PPE are in short supply and the underlying inequities of health in the United States are being exposed, we can not use the same eugenic logic to make medical and health decisions moving forward. As a scientific community, we can critically examine our assumptions and interrupt eugenic trains of reasoning as we advocate for justice in science and health.