

The University of Western Ontario  
London Ontario

Department of English

**English 9087B: Regulating the Edwardian Body**

Winter, 2019.

Tuesday, 3:30-6:30

UC 4415

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Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 11:30-12:30.

Michel Foucault calls eugenics one of the “two great innovations in the technology of sex in the second half of the nineteenth century” (*HS*, 118). The administration of sex and its fertility to which Foucault refers, however, reached a crisis point at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Economic challenges to British supremacy, a humiliating showing by Britain in the Boer War and a declining birthrate, at least among the upper classes, led many Britons to fear that the Empire was becoming less than robust, and that its decline could be mapped onto the bodies of the populace. Eugenics, the ‘science of improving stock’ (Galton) appeared to offer a solution to what was seen as a national deterioration in health, wealth and power. As Karl Pearson writes: “without high average soundness of body and soundness of mind, a nation can neither be built up nor an empire preserved. Permanence and dominance in the world passes to and from nations even with their rise and fall in mental and bodily fitness” (1909).

Surprisingly, eugenics in this period appealed to a broad spectrum of political opinion, and was invoked not only by conservatives, but also by sex radicals and social reformers. The atrocities of WWII and the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century have understandably impoverished our perception of eugenics but, in the Edwardian period, eugenics was a site of political contestation for both radicals and conservatives. In both its ‘positive’ (the encouragement of ‘fit’ procreation) and ‘negative’ (the discouragement of ‘unfit’ procreation) aspects, eugenics took a central role in debates on issues such as maternity, birth control, poverty, women’s suffrage, sexology, class, disease and race. Indeed, it is hard to overstate the extent to which eugenics permeated Edwardian public discourse. Edwardian eugenics, then, becomes an exemplary site that raises questions about biopolitics in the period, as well as questions about why it was such an attractive theory to fiction writers and theorists who were also socialist, feminist or queer.

**Schedule:**

- NB: 1.** The site [archive.org](http://archive.org) refers to the Internet Archive; if the link doesn’t work, Google “Internet Archive” and use the search function. You can read online or download in various formats. I have also used Project Gutenberg, which sometimes provides more readable copies.
- 2.** Anything not online (Ellis, Foucault and Stopes) will be posted on OWL.
- 3.** Complete works by Darwin and Galton are online at [darwin-online.org.uk](http://darwin-online.org.uk) and [galton.org](http://galton.org)
- 4.** The archive for “The Eugenics Review” is at [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov) > [NCBI](#) > [Literature](#) > [PubMed Central \(PMC\)](#)
- 5.** Feel free to order hard copies if you wish (or to find different online sites from those suggested). I use Broadview Press editions, where possible.

## January 8: Introduction

### January 15:

\*Charles Darwin: *The Origin of Species*. Chapter 4, “Natural Selection”; Chapter 14, “Recapitulation and Conclusion” ( <http://darwin-online.org.uk/>)

\*Francis Galton: *Hereditary Genius*. “Introduction”; “Classification of Men According to their Reputation”; “Classification of Men According to their Natural Gifts”; Comparison of the Two Classifications”; “The Comparative Worth of Different Races” (<http://archive.org/details/hereditarygenius1869galt>)

\*Sarah Grand: “Eugenia” from *Our Manifold Nature: Stories from Life* (1894) (<http://archive.org/stream/ourmanifoldnatu00grangoog#page/n5/mode/2up>)

### January 22:

\*Richard Marsh, *The Beetle* (1897) (<http://archive.org/details/thebeetle05164gut>)

\*Herbert Spencer, “The Social Organism” (1860). ([http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=com\\_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=330&chapter=119773&layout=html&Itemid=27](http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=330&chapter=119773&layout=html&Itemid=27))

### January 29:

\*R.L. Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) [https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/s/stevenson/robert\\_louis/s848dj/chapter1.html](https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/s/stevenson/robert_louis/s848dj/chapter1.html)

\* Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (1895). “Dedication”; Book 1, “Fin de Siecle”; Book 5, “The Twentieth Century” (<http://archive.org/details/degeneration035137mbp>)

### February 5:

\* Joseph Conrad, *The Secret Agent* (1907). (<http://archive.org/details/theseecretagentas00974gut>)

\*Michel Foucault: *The History of Sexuality Vol 1*. Part 5 “Right of Death and Power Over Life” : *Society Must be Defended*, Chapter 11 (17 March, 1976) (on OWL)

### February 12:

\* Marie Carmichael Stopes, *Vectia, A Banned Play* (1926) (on OWL)

\*Mary Scharlieb, *Womanhood and Race Regeneration* (1912) (<http://archive.org/stream/womanhoodracereg00scharich#page/6/mode/2up>)

## February 19-23: Reading Week

### February 26:

\*Christabel Pankhurst, *The Great Scourge and How to End It* (1913). [aka *Plain Facts About a Great Evil*, US Edition]

(<http://www.archive.org/details/cu31924021842889> )

C.W. Saleeby, *The Progress of Eugenics* (1914). Parts 2, 3, 4.

([http://archive.org/stream/cihm\\_992105#page/n17/mode/2up](http://archive.org/stream/cihm_992105#page/n17/mode/2up))

### March 5:

\*H.G. Wells, *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896).

<https://archive.org/details/TheIslandOfDr.MoreauAPossibility>

\* Margaret Sanger, “Woman’s Error and Her Debt,” “When Should a Woman Avoid Having Children?” “Birth Control – A Parents’ Problem or Woman’s?” “Will Birth Control Help the Cause of Labour?” from *Woman and the New Race* (1920). (<http://www.bartleby.com/1013/>)

### March 12:

Rose Macaulay, *What Not: A Prophetic Comedy* (1918)

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/35198/35198-h/35198-h.htm>

\*H.G. Wells, *Anticipations* (1902) Chapter 9

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/19229/19229-h/19229-h.htm>

### March 19:

\*Rebecca West, *The Return of the Soldier* (1918)

(<http://archive.org/stream/returnofsoldie00west#page/n5/mode/2up>)

\* Havelock Ellis, *The Task of Social Hygiene*. Chapters 1-6

(<http://archive.org/stream/tasksocialhygie02elligoog#page/n16/mode/2up>)

### March 26:

\*Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland* (1915)

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/32/32-h/32-h.htm>

\*Karl Pearson, “The Academic Aspect of the Science of National Eugenics”

(<http://www.archive.org/details/journaldebotani00morogooog>)

### April 2:

\* Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925). (<http://archive.org/details/Mrs.Dalloway>)

\* Edith Lees Ellis, “Eugenics and the Mystical Outlook”; “Eugenics and Spiritual Parenthood” from *The New Horizon in Love and Life* (1921)

## **Assignments:**

### **1. Seminar on primary text: 20%**

Lead one class for 45-60 minutes. You should aim to make an interactive presentation rather than a speech. These presentations work best if you think of them as teaching exercises in which you engage the class in discussing a problem, issue or question in the text, directed by your insights.

### **2. 8-10 page write-up of seminar: 20%**

Essentially, this will be a write-up of your seminar, due two weeks after you present it. The length is about that of a conference presentation. The seminar does not have to be all-inclusive, but should be an argument about a particular aspect of the text. Feel free to engage critical and/or theoretical works from the syllabus or from elsewhere. You may use this write up as the basis for your final paper.

### **3. Seminar on a supplementary text: 15%**

A 20-30 minute presentation on one of the supplementary readings for that week. If the supplementary reading is a long one, you may choose to focus on a part of it.

### **4. Short write-up of the presentation. 3-5 pages. Again, you may be selective. 10%**

### **5. 15-20-page major paper: 25%. Due: April 15**

The topic is open, but please see me before you embark. You may choose to include the text upon which you presented your seminar, but you should also broaden the discussion to include other literary and/or supplementary texts. You are free to explore more contemporary manifestations of eugenics or to look at texts not on our reading list of whatever nationality or period.

### **6. Participation 10%**

**NB:** Late papers will be penalised 2% per day unless you have made prior arrangements with me. If there are medical reasons, please let me know. If you miss your seminar for reasons other than documented medical or other tragedy you will not be able to make it up.

## **Statement on Academic Offences**

“Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_grad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf)

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