Are there really distinct “kinds of people”? Does our habit of seeing the social world as if there are such kinds have a history? Can learning this history be useful in overcoming at least some of the injustices perpetuated through the reification or naturalization of human sub-types? Or is the perception of racialized difference simply a “curious kink of the human mind”, to use W.E.B. Du Bois’s phrase, practically pre-determining us to perceive some racial categories or others as part of nature’s most basic joint-carvings? This course will begin with a consideration of the problems of natural kinds, species, and nominalism in early modern natural philosophy and metaphysics, and of the way debates about these shaped discussion of human racial difference. We will consider the modern effort to identify and name divisions within the human species as part of a larger process of naturalization, and thus will confront the question of the relationship between science and racism. We will be attentive to the role of imperialism and slavery in framing philosophical discussion of human diversity.

Students earn course credit by attending class sessions and writing a term paper, completing a take-home final exam, or by some other project. For those who would like to take this course for credit, or, if you are a graduate student in Philosophy and want to get a unit for your work in the course, please see me, and we will arrange an appropriate final exercise, based on your interests and your level of preparation. All students participating in the course will be expected to do at least one in-class presentation of the course reading materials. In the first class session on January 30 we will try to come up with a schedule of presentations for the following weeks, beginning from February 6. For graduate students in Philosophy this can count toward the “in seminar presentation” requirement.

Below are the tentative readings for the term. They may be altered as we go. Typically, before each class I will send you a note with some indication of how to approach the readings and what the emphasis in class will be.

The course readings, both required and suggested, will be made available well in advance of each class session, either in a digital format or by reserve. There is no required text for the course, but my own book, *Nature, Human Nature, and Human Difference: The Concept of Race in Early Modern Philosophy* (Princeton University Press, 2015), has been ordered at Labyrinth Bookstore (I’m also happy to send you a pdf of it). This is not required reading, though the particular authors we will be discussing, and the order we will follow, generally figure in the book as well, and in that respect it is a useful paratext for the course.
Provisional Schedule of Readings

Week 1: January 30
Introduction – What is “natural kind” talk really about? Are there really “kinds” of people?

Required readings:
J. S. Mill, *System of Logic* (1843)

Suggested reading:
Francisco Bethencourt, *Racisms: From the Crusades to the Twentieth Century* (2014)

Week 2: February 6
The Iberian Curve – Race and Nature in Spanish Colonial America

Required readings:
Bartolomé de las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (1552)
Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, *Royal Commentaries of the Incas* (1609)

Suggested readings:

Week 3: February 13
Libertine Polygenism

Required reading
Isaac La Peyrère, *Men Before Adam* (1656)

Suggested reading

Week 4: February 20
Migration and Naturalized Monogenesis

Required readings:
Hugo Grotius, *Dissertation on the Origin of the American Races* (1642)
Matthew Hale, *The Primitive Origination of Mankind, Considered and Examined according to the Light of Nature* (1677)

Suggested reading:

**Week 5: February 27**  
**Leibniz, Part I — Introduction**

*Required reading:*  
G. W. Leibniz, *New Essays concerning Human Understanding*, excerpt (1704)

*Suggested reading:*  

**Week 6: March 6**  
**Leibniz, Part II — “The explication of the series”: On Genealogy and gentes**

*Required reading:*  
Selected ethnohistorical texts from G. W. Leibniz, *Otium hannoveranum* (ed. Friedrich Feller, 1718); *Opera Omnia* (ed. Louis Dutens, 1765) (I will provide my own translations).

**Spring Recess**

**Week 7: March 20**  
**Leibniz, Part III — On Domination, Metaphysical and Political**

*Required reading:*  
G. W. Leibniz, “A Method for Instituting a New, Invincible Militia that Can Subjugate the Entire Earth” (1671)  
G. W. Leibniz, “Meditations on the Common Notion of Justice” (1701)

*Suggested reading:*  

**Week 8: March 27**  
**Slavery and Jurisprudence**

*Required reading:*  
Jacobus Capitein, *Slavery Not Incompatible with Christian Freedom* (1742)

*Suggested reading:*  

**Week 9: April 3**  
**Taxonomy and/as Naturalization**
Required reading:
François Bernier, “A New Division of the Earth” (1684)

Suggested reading:

Week 10: April 10
Degeneration and Monogenesis in the Enlightenment

Required reading:
Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, “Of the Varieties in the Human Species” (1749)
J. F. Blumenbach, *On the Natural Variety of Humankind* (1775)

Week 11: April 17
Enlightenment Racism (and Antiracism?)

Required reading:
Immanuel Kant, *On the Different Races of Man* (1777)

Suggested reading:

Week 12: April 24
TBA