



Instructor's Manual Lesson 5

The Holocaust and Eugenics

This instructor's manual has been made with the following in mind:

- **To provide the instructor with maximum flexibility to edit and adopt the material based on his/her classroom requirements and audience.**
- **The audience is between the ages of 14 -18.**
- **The lesson would be between 45 to 60 minutes long.**

Learning outcomes:

1. To learn about eugenics and its role in the Holocaust
2. To learn about the wider role of eugenics in early 20th century political thinking
3. To think about how eugenics stems from racialization of people as other / deviant etc.
4. To identify the legacy of eugenics in current times and identify the problems with resurgent thinking about eugenics.

Begin with explaining that, as with other tragedies, the Holocaust also built on racialised division. This resulted in "ethnic" cleansing in Europe of mainly Jewish, Polish, and Roma as well as other racialised populations and people with disabilities or seen to be deviant. Part of the reason for this this tragedy came out of a form of scientific racism known as "eugenics." Such a tragedy causes us to ask, how did this happen? If we look at the historical context, we can begin to see how there were systems, ideologies, and laws in place globally that ensured some people, who were seen as "unfit" because of their different ethnicity, religion or disabilities, were the targets of violence.

Slide 2

Allow students 3-4 minutes to write down what they think eugenics means. Bring the class together to discuss their thoughts (see classroom discussion options at the end of this document).

Slide 3

Eugenics was a form of scientific racism that took root in the 19th and 20th centuries after the rise of Darwinism (though Darwin did not espouse these ideologies himself). It buttressed the idea that racialised people, people with disabilities, and the economically disadvantaged were dirty, less intelligent, and were more inclined to being "morally corrupt" than "desired races" (often white Protestants from Northern Europe referred to as "Aryans").

Eugenics movements were often centered around forced sterilization, the imprisonment or sequestering of “undesired” groups, and attempts to increase the population of “preferred” groups.

Slide 4

Allow students 1-2 minutes to think about where they believe eugenics was practiced. Bring the class back together and take the students’ answers.

Slide 5

Ensure that students understand that this was not only practiced in Germany, but many other countries such as the United States, and Canada, as well as other parts of Europe and many regions Europe colonised.

Students should also understand that these ideas were cemented through colonial practices such as justifying the enslavement of black people and framing Indigenous people as racially inferior.

Eugenics movements, and “ethnic” cleansing were not uncommon systems for asserting power and dominance, and were used often as a weapon of colonial powers to reduce the population sizes of areas that they wanted to take over.

Slide 6

The eugenics movement was central to The Holocaust. As the Nazi party gained more power, they focused on the mass sterilization of people with varying disabilities because they thought they would reproduce an “inferior” population.

In 1939, there was also the mass murder of children as well as institutionalised adults with disabilities. As the Nazis gained more power, they encouraged the “preferred” races (Aryan Germans) to reproduce, while sterilizing Jews, Roma, Poles, and other racialised groups.

Slide 7

Anti-Semitism, was also common in many parts of the western world, and Europe was steeped in a history of anti-Semitism. This characteristic is often a focus of discussions about the Holocaust, with little regard to how anti-Semitism was pervasive in many places outside Germany.

Slide 8 - 9

Go through the facts in this slide and emphasise that a key characteristic of the Holocaust was the institutionalisation of Anti-Semitism and the implementation of laws that gradually pushed Jewish communities out of the German public sphere. This is important in understanding how the ultimate physical violence and killings come about. This state killing was highly organised as Jewish people were targeted and eventually forced into camps or deported.

Slide 10 -11

Describe how The Holocaust took place by going through the various points on this slide. Jews, Roma, and Poles were often rounded up and put into camps. They were often placed in forced labour camps in both the public and private sector. Often forced to work long days in horrid conditions, many died in these camps from overexertion. There were also those who were killed en masse, and those who were subjected to various forms of medical experimentation.

Slide 12

As a group, allow students to discuss this question. It is important that students understand that The Holocaust was part of continuum where various groups of “undesired” people were the victims of violence, forced sterilization, medical experimentation and mass murder. These were all colonial practices that made their way into Europe.

Culminating Activity for Lesson 5.

The instructor may provide reading materials on the the history of The Holocaust and eugenics in the Western world. The instructor should ask the students to formulate two 150 – 200 word responses to the questions below after completing their readings.

Case 1:

Students should explore how eugenics was practiced in many places in the Western world. Explore how even figures like Winston Churchill were implicated in the eugenics movement in the early 20th century¹. Look at recent arguments about the resurgence of eugenics thinking² and reflections upon the injustices created³.

Case 2:

Explore the history of systemic discrimination in regards to The Holocaust; link this history to an act of systemic discrimination that occurs today.

Discussion Activities Suggestions (Can be applied to any discussion questions in the lesson):

1. Think-pair-share: Students think about the question themselves and develop a response, they pair with a partner, and finally share their ideas with their partner.

¹ Churchill and Eugenics, by Sir Martin Gilbert CBE, The International Churchill Society, <https://winstonchurchill.org/publications/finest-hour-extras/churchill-and-eugenics-1/>

² See e.g. ‘Toby Young: what is ‘progressive eugenics’ and what does it have to do with meritocracy?’, by Ansgar Anson <http://theconversation.com/toby-young-what-is-progressive-eugenics-and-what-does-it-have-to-do-with-meritocracy-89671>

³ See e.g. ‘Eugenics@UCL: In the [#GaltonLectureTheatre](https://youtu.be/WTrwfmOxL6M)’, <https://youtu.be/WTrwfmOxL6M>

2. Small Groups: Students get into groups of four and discuss the issue, the groups are then switched and two students from one group are moved to another group to discuss the new questions or expand on the previous questions.
3. *Snowball: Two students discuss the question and join with another two students to discuss their ideas in a group of four. Then the group of four joins another group of four to form a group of eight and this continues until a whole class discussion is formed.
4. Teach-ok: Students pair up and reteach main concepts to the class after the teacher has given a brief introduction to the topic.