



2018-1-ES01-KA203-050606



## Unit 12 - Biopolitics and eugenics – determining factors in a nation's governing



**Popa” University of Medicine and Pharmacy & Fundatia EuroEd  
Iasi, Romania**



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**Eugenics is the science that deals with the improvement and the development of the racial qualities of an individual or the innate qualities of a race.**



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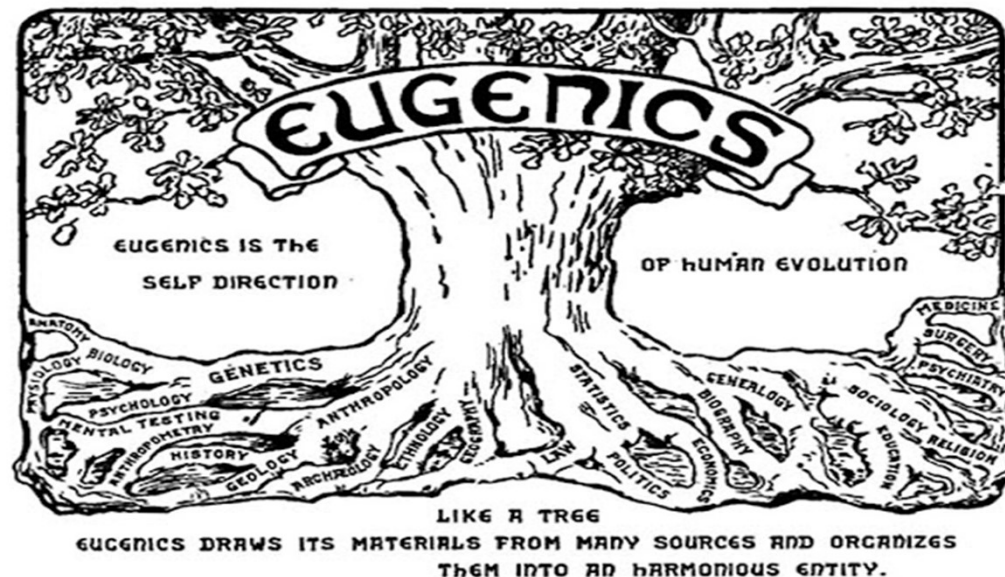


## Famous eugenic images

One of the famous eugenic images is that of a tree- used as a logo for the 2nd International Eugenic Congress and then for the 3rd International Eugenic Congress.

So, we believed that in 1945 we defeated Nazis and then we cut down the tree and eugenics was gone, by cutting down that eugenic tree. But what we didn't realize at that time is that what you see with a tree is only the canopy and the trunk. But what you don't see is the roots. The roots of that tree remained and they thrived for the past 50 years.

*(interview with Prof.Marius Turda)*



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## Information for lecturers (1)

- Long term impact of biopolitics and eugenics during the 20th century worldwide and its consequences.

### The lecture contains four sections

- the first section defines the concept of biopolitics and presents significant historical information in order to offer a context for the evolution of the main European ideologies of the 20th century.
- the second section centres on eugenic sterilisation with examples from different cultures around the world and Romania. It then elaborates on the “why”, “how” and “on whom” this procedure was implemented.
- the third section reviews women’s role in the Romanian society of various periods of time, in accordance with the political system.
- the fourth section is dedicated to the case study which reflects upon the Romanian decree passed in '66 concerning abortion laws and its impact.



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## Information for lecturers (2)

### What is essential for the students :

- to know as much as possible about eugenic practices in time, some obvious , but many 'camouflaged'.
- to remember that medical staff has always played an important part in applying the eugenistic methods
- to understand the moral aspects of eugenics in order to take an informed and ethical decision if the situation requires it
- to reflect on what eugenics means for contemporary societies and people.



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## Learning objectives (1)

### Stress laid on cognitive and affective domains

#### Knowledge related learning objectives:

- Introduce the students to the concept of eugenics and biopolitics, by defining and identifying various cases in time and geographical position
- Familiarise the students with the conceptualisation of eugenics, exemplifying with materials from past and present authors
- Introduce the students to the history and motivation of eugenic attitudes along centuries in various cultures, from ancient times to the present
- Familiarise the students with the differences between the motivation which led to this process and the variety of methods used to achieve the desired results, along centuries, under various forms of government,
- Introduce the students to some of the ideologies of the XXth century around the world and their consequences in terms of eugenics
- Introduce the students to eugenic sterilisation implemented as a rationalized practice and its outcome



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## Learning objectives (2)

Attitude and competence related learning objectives:

- Raise students' awareness about decision making in issues of medical ethics, in order for them to avoid to become uninformed tools
- Introduce students to the bioethical lines a physician can be forced to cross, given the right social context, and the consequence that ensue.
- Introduce students to the outcome of denying a universal human right thus enabling them 'to draw the line between reasonable measures and excessive acts'(interview with Prof Marius Turda), when one speaks of the health os a country
- Motivate students to become part of a system whose role is 'to educate and discuss these things publicly, so younger people can be informed and they could make better decisions about how these ideas and practices are influencing their lives'
- Motivate students to include historians, social workers and politicians in the deabate about eugenics and its future consequences
- Stimulate reflections upon the significance of eugenics today knowing that the impact of former manifestations of eugenics continues to represent a very sensitive and emotional issue for many people, not only because eugenics was a source of discrimination based on race, social class, gender, disabilities, but also because new manifestations of these attitudes are more and more frequent
- Develop students' competence to distinguish between what is ethical and what is not
- Develop students' competence to support their ideas in discussions, speeches , public debates or in front of various administrative or political authorities



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## Teaching methodology (principles, methods and strategies)

- The learning objects strategy approach – key word to the whole unit
- To maximise the teaching and learning of the topic an active learning environment will be created, that is all stages of the course, be it lecture, reading or listening, have elements which will lead to reflection, questions, pair or group discussions.
- Enhance motivation –expressing personal opinion
- Attention focus- the assessment questionnaires a useful tool
- Connecting knowledge
- Presentation, example giving, explanations
- Case study- leading to dialogue
- Listening- an important learning strategy – very useful in their future medical activity as well
- Opinion sharing and teacher-student, student- student dialogues
- Reflection



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## Information for students (1)

### What they are going to know

- the historical evolution of processes and events which led to the birth of eugenics as a science and to biopolitics
- differences between how various cultures understood and applied eugenics
- the motivation behind using eugenics
- important scientific discoveries can be used for harmful practises
- the role of biopolitics in the life of modern society
- the long-term effect on the population of various countries
- society changes and transforms and eugenics changes and transforms accordingly.
- the consequences of eugenics in present day life
- the role of physicians in applying eugenistic practises under biopolitical influences



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## Case Study (1)

### The 770 Decree or How to appropriate a woman's body

- WW2, but especially the Romanian communist regime, mimicked the whole effort of the feminist movement in Romania. The dissolution of the feminist movement, the Romanian women's freedom of expression, the negation of the right to make choices concerning their own bodies and the nationalisation of women's reproductive capacity were consequences of the communist policy laws.
- The 770 decree was passed on the 2nd of October 1966. This decree classified abortion as a crime and exclusively placed maternity in the services of the communist state.
- women from all over Romania were subjected to a complex mechanism of control and surveillance



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## Case Study (2)

- The number of deaths due to the complications of illegal abortions massively increased. In 1989, the year of the Romanian revolution, there were 1193 deaths. Throughout 1966-1989 almost 10.000 deaths of women were recorded
- Poland, Hungary, Central and South America are some present day examples of countries where anti abortion laws are applied
- The need to control female bodies is hidden under eugenic terms such as reproduction, breeding, the future of the nation



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## Case Study (3)

### Supporting Video Interviews

- Video interview 1 – Interview Prof. Marius Turda - Eugenics impact on natalist policies <https://youtu.be/4G3stJuogj8>
- Video interview 2 - Interview Prof. Marius Turda - Eugenics in Europe and eugenic sterilization <https://youtu.be/zJLcrLtNjUA>
- Video interview 3 - Interview Prof. Marius Turda - Eugenics belong to the history, or is still present? <https://youtu.be/WguebGqd8UE>
- Video interview 4 – Interview Prof. Marius Turda - Eugenics and the female body propaganda [https://youtu.be/wUG4\\_UiHi-E](https://youtu.be/wUG4_UiHi-E)



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## Reading

Biopolitics is a concept defined as the calculus of costs and benefits through which the biological capacities of a population are optimally managed. In other words, a country's demographics is taken into consideration as an economic tool in order to enhance a nation's potential, while also perceived as a decisive factor in a country's government policy. In this context of pondering the strategies and mechanisms through which human life processes are managed under various regimes, biopolitics introduces a new justification to ending someone's life which is 'protecting society as a whole and preserving the social body's health'



Eugenics is the science that deals with the improvement and the development of the racial qualities of an individual or the innate qualities of a race.

An increase of eugenic practices was noticed all over the world



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## Reading –eugenic sterilisation

The medical world engaged in eugenics

Measures proposed in the 1920s in Romania

- 1) Every degenerate individual should be sterilized and, if possible, returned to society.
- 2) Every degenerate and sterilized individual should be kept in isolation in asylums and colonies until he/she can be returned to society as a useful member.
- 3) Only those individuals who still represent a danger to society after their sterilization should be isolated for life, while they should sustain themselves and society through work in gardens, workshops etc. (...) It is in this direction that we must orient our efforts to protect superior elements and prohibit without mercy inferior elements from producing children and incurring family responsibilities.”

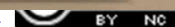


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## Reading – Women’s role between the two WW

A general truth, still valid in many countries nowadays is that the control of feminine fecundity represents a point of domination of one gender over the other, and natality has long embodied a game of power.

Maternity was perpetually on the political and medical agenda.

In the period between the two world wars, natality was either imposed through sanctions or encouraged by a reward system, the medical power thus holding the public control of all pregnancies, of women’s life.



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## Formative Evaluation Questionnaire

Question 1	When was sterilisation first used for ? Where was it?
Question 2	What regime advocated the 'super race'?
Question 3	Were women involved in advocating eugenic methods?
Question 4	What are the main elements of the logo of the the 2nd and 3rd Congresses in Eugenics ?
Question 5	What countries have passed laws influenced by eugenics , in our days?





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