

The Eugenics Movement in North Carolina

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guides.library.duke.edu/instruction-eugenics

BRIEF OVERVIEW

This class session encourages students to engage with the history and the lasting legacy of the eugenics movement in North Carolina during the 20th century through a critical analysis of primary sources. This session includes many different types of primary sources—such as pamphlets, newspapers, government reports, and more—as well as an activity to guide document analysis and class discussion.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- **Practice** textual and visual analysis using multiple primary source types.
- **Interrogate** the audience, author, and intended purpose of historical documents.
- **Develop** an understanding of eugenics in North Carolina (and more broadly) through the use of primary sources.

BEFORE CLASS:

- Although this is an online session, we want you to know a little bit about the Rubenstein Library! Watch [The Rubenstein Library's Collections](#) and [Finding the Rubenstein Library](#).
- Take a moment to [read the Rubenstein Library's approach to classes](#). It's very short, but includes things you'll want to keep in mind as you work with primary sources.
- Explore [this exhibit on the eugenics movement](#) from the University of Virginia for a bit of background information.

SESSION OUTLINE

Activity:

For our class session, you'll be working in small groups to explore primary sources. You'll find three digitized sets of sources [here](#). Your instructor or professor may assign a set to your group, or you may want to choose your own—coordinate with the other groups in your class to make sure that every set is assigned to a group. If your class is large, more than one group can work with a set—each group will bring different perspectives to the document analysis.

This activity can work for synchronous (e.g., a Zoom class session that includes breakout rooms) or asynchronous (e.g., a multi-step discussion on an online forum) class sessions.

1. Start by spending some time reviewing one of the documents in your group's set on your own using the [Document Analysis Worksheet](#) to guide your analysis. The purpose of this worksheet is simply to have you think closely about the document—just make brief notes! Coordinate so that each document in the set gets analyzed—some of the documents are longer so it's fine if a couple of people work on those.

2. Next, working in your groups, share what you observed about your document, either via a Zoom breakout room or discussion forum posts. As you discuss, think about how your documents connect to one another and what sort of story they tell about the eugenics movement. (You'll share with the class in the next step so think about what you want to tell the rest of the class about your documents and what you've learned from the documents.)
3. Finally, each group will share what they've learned with the class, either by welcoming (and responding to) comments on your discussion posts or by an informal report at the end of a Zoom session. As the groups share, think about how your document set connects to the others, note common themes you notice, and ask questions of each other.

Class Materials:

- [Primary Source Sets](#)
 - Eugenics Board of North Carolina
 - Human Betterment League of North Carolina
 - Better Babies Contests
- [Document Analysis Worksheet](#)

Additional Resources:

- [Eugenics Research Guide](#) (for finding additional primary sources)

QUESTIONS?

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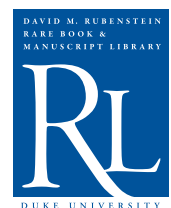
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