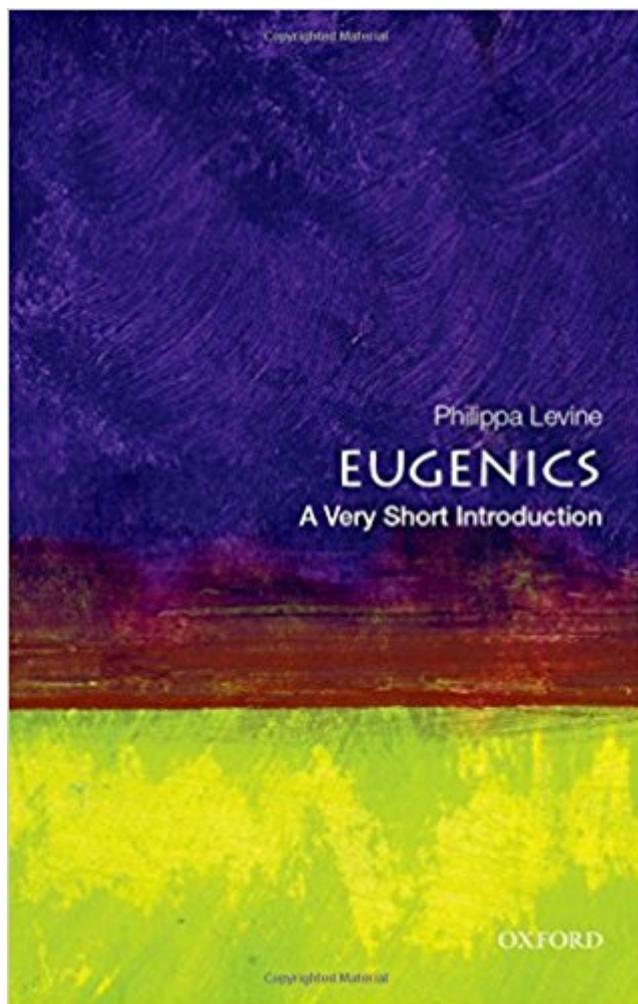


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Eugenics: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions)



Synopsis

In 1883, Francis Galton, a cousin of Charles Darwin, coined the word "eugenics" to express his dream of perfecting the human race by applying the laws of genetic heredity. Adapting Darwin's theory of evolution to human society, eugenics soon became a powerful, international movement, committed to using the principles of heredity and statistics to encourage healthy and discourage unhealthy reproduction. Early in the twentieth century and across the world, doctors, social reformers, and politicians turned to the new science of eugenics as a means to improve and strengthen their populations. Eugenics advocates claimed their methods would result in healthier, fitter babies and would dramatically limit human suffering. The reality was a different story. In the name of scientific progress and of human improvement, eugenicists targeted the weak and the sick, triggering coercive legislation on issues as disparate as race, gender, immigration, euthanasia, abortion, sterilization, intelligence, mental illness, and disease control. Nationalists eagerly embraced eugenics as a means to legitimize their countries' superiority and racialized assumptions, and the Nazis notoriously used eugenics to shape their "final solution." In this lucid volume, Philippa Levine tackles the intricate and controversial history of eugenics, masterfully synthesizing the enormous range of policies and experiments carried out in the name of eugenics around the world throughout the twentieth century. She questions the widespread belief that eugenics disappeared after World War II and evaluates the impact of eugenics on current reproductive and genetic sciences. Charting the development of such controversial practices as artificial insemination, sperm donation, and population control, this book offers a powerful, extraordinarily timely reflection on the frequent interplay between genetics and ethics. Eugenics may no longer be a household word, but we feel its effects even today.

Book Information

Series: Very Short Introductions

Paperback: 168 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press; 2nd ed. edition (January 2, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0199385904

ISBN-13: 978-0199385904

Product Dimensions: 6.8 x 0.4 x 4.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 3 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #391,750 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #24 in Books > Textbooks > Medicine & Health Sciences > Medicine > Clinical > Reproductive Medicine & Technology #45 in Books > Medical Books > Medicine > Internal Medicine > Reproductive Medicine & Technology #113 in Books > Textbooks > Medicine & Health Sciences > Medicine > Basic Sciences > Genetics

Customer Reviews

Philippa Levine is the Mary Helen Thompson Centennial Professor in the Humanities and the Co-Director of the Program in British Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. She is the co-editor of *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics* and she has published extensively on nineteenth- and twentieth-century British and British Empire history, as well as on science, sexuality, and medicine.

I definitely learned something new from this book. This book talks about what eugenics is, and how the eugenics movement took root around the world. Eugenics is the science that finds ways for mankind to produce offspring with less hereditary diseases, or are free of hereditary diseases entirely. I had never known that the eugenics movement was so widespread in the early 20th century. It discusses the ethical and controversial issues surrounding eugenics, as well as the vastly varying opinions of both its proponents and opponents. It also discusses how eugenics was twisted in all sorts of ways, and interpreted in different ways. I give this book 4 stars.

A well written history of eugenics. It is well researched and is very easy to understand. The author draws on a host of sources. The topic is well covered. It is an important book.

scary book, read it and pass it on

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