



# YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

*to strengthen teaching in public schools®*

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative  
2021 Volume II: Race, Class, and Gender in Today's America

---

## **Medical Inequality in America: Henrietta Lacks, the Tuskegee Study, and Covid 19**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 21.02.09, published September 2021  
by Krista Waldron

In our seminar Race, Class, and Gender in Today's America, I became interested in the history of medical inequities for these groups and what has been or can be done to address them. This unit will cover three main topics: the Tuskegee Syphilis study, the story of Henrietta Lacks and her HeLa cells, and current inequalities in our Covid 19 present. The focus will be on the problems and solutions that arise from these key questions: (1) What role do race and/or gender play in healthcare access? (2) What are the long-term effects of this? (3) What role do institutions like government or the medical field play in these inequities? (4) Do the rights of one outweigh the benefit to possibly millions? (5) What can be done after the fact to restore medical justice? Because this unit is for a language arts classroom, grades 10-12, the emphasis will be on critical reading, writing, and viewing, with lots of opportunities for students to think about tone and purpose, especially. We will read primary and secondary documents from a variety of resources, and we will end the unit with a cumulative problem-solving project.

(Developed for English and Language Arts, grades 9-10; recommended for English and Language Arts, grades 9-12)

---

<https://teachers.yale.edu>

©2023 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University, All Rights Reserved. Yale National Initiative®, Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute®, On Common Ground®, and League of Teachers Institutes® are registered trademarks of Yale University.

For terms of use visit [https://teachers.yale.edu/terms\\_of\\_use](https://teachers.yale.edu/terms_of_use)