

# Eugenics at William & Mary

As the Eugenics movement swept through the United States and especially Virginia, the University of Virginia became a hotspot of eugenical research and teaching. A cohort of biologists at UVA had widespread influence over legislation and public and scientific opinion in the state and nationally. William & Mary's biology department had connections with UVA's eugenicists, especially through Professor Donald W. Davis, the college's main eugenicist. Davis believed that American society would be better off if those deemed inferior were not able to reproduce, and believed that that conviction was backed by science. He and others believed that the white race was in danger and needed to be protected by eliminating from the gene pool those they saw unfit and by preventing miscegenation. The eugenics movement disproportionately targeted and vilified black and Indian citizens, but also the poor and the disabled. Davis attempted to influence public opinion through his classes as well as through lectures to the public, involvement in eugenics organizations, and by exposing high school teachers and other educators to eugenics. Davis thought that the unscientific rhetoric by the likes of Walter Plecker and the Anglo Saxon Clubs of America (ASCOA) would damage the reputation of eugenics, and attempted to defend the "science" of the movement. William & Mary was not a hotbed of eugenics in the way that UVA was, but the eugenics movement certainly had a huge influence on the Biology department and beyond and the Biology department had a not insignificant influence on the eugenics movement in Virginia.

## Eugenics-related courses in the Biology Department at William & Mary

- 1913-1919: Evolution and Heredity
  - Introduced in 1913 in the Zoology Department, before Davis was at the school
  - Likely taught by Professor John Woodside Ritchie
  - Original description: "A series of lectures dealing with the broader aspects of biology and the social applications of biological principles."<sup>1</sup>
  - Only a one credit course at first, then in 1917 became two credits and requiring instructor permission and 10 credits in Biology
  - In 1919, the description of the class changed to: "A series of lectures dealing with the philosophical side of Biology and the fundamental laws of heredity as revealed by recent investigations." This was the last year the class was taught.<sup>2</sup>
- Summer 1920--"Eugenics"
  - Taught by Donald W. Davis in the second summer session
  - Description: "A course dealing with the known facts of human inheritance and the provision necessary for the improvement of the race; the prevention of inherited

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<sup>1</sup> "Bulletin: The College of William and Mary in Virginia Catalogue 1912-1913" (Williamsburg: College of William and Mary, 1913), 58

<sup>2</sup> "Bulletin: The College of William and Mary in Virginia Catalogue 1918-1919" (Williamsburg: College of William and Mary, 1919), 64.

deficiencies; the origin of local characteristics and the effects of immigration upon our national traits. 2 credits”<sup>3</sup>

- A test given and this class and Davis’ suggestions for improving the course can be found later in this outline.
- Genetics
  - Introduced in 1920, after Evolution and Heredity was cancelled.
  - Taught by Donald W. Davis as of 1936 (before that course catalogs did not note the Professors’ names)
  - Original description: “The principles of variation and heredity in plants and animals, including man ; and the practical application of these principles. Lectures, three hours ; first term three credits. Prerequisite, ten credits in the department.”<sup>4</sup>
  - In 1923 the description changed to, “The principles of variation and heredity, the origin of new types and factors concerned in their development.”<sup>5</sup>
  - Beginning summer 1923 the course was offered, taught by Davis, with the same description.<sup>6</sup> (perhaps replacing the classes explicitly about eugenics taught the previous three years.)
- Summer 1921 and 1922: “Genetics and Eugenics”
  - 5 lectures, 1st term, 2 credits, taught by Donald W. Davis
  - Description: “A study of the laws of heredity and their application to human problems.”<sup>7</sup>
  - In 1922 the same course is listed, but Davis’ name is crossed out by hand and replaced with another name (illegible, either Darren, Farren, or something to that effect) in an original copy<sup>8</sup>
- The 1923-1924 school year there were two new courses: Heredity and Theories of Evolution
  - Both taught by Donald W. Davis
  - aimed not only at Biology students but students outside of the department as well
  - Surely a replacement for and expansion on the cancelled Evolution and Heredity class

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<sup>3</sup> *Bulletin of the College of William and Mary: Announcement for the Summer Session 1920*, (Williamsburg: College of William and Mary, 1920), 18.

<sup>4</sup> “Bulletin: The College of William and Mary in Virginia Catalogue 1919-1920” (Williamsburg: College of William and Mary, 1920, 107.

<sup>5</sup> “Bulletin: The College of William and Mary in Virginia Catalogue 1922-1923” (Williamsburg: College of William and Mary, 1923, 77.

<sup>6</sup> *Bulletin of the College of William and Mary: Announcement for the Summer Quarter 1923*, (Williamsburg: College of William and Mary, 1923), 30.

<sup>7</sup> *Bulletin of the College of William and Mary: Announcement for the Summer Session 1921*, (Williamsburg: College of William and Mary, 1921), 18.

<sup>8</sup> *Bulletin of the College of William and Mary: Announcement for the Summer Quarter 1922*, (Williamsburg: College of William and Mary, 1922), 25.

223. HEREDITY. *Winter quarter; five hours; five credits.*

In this course are studied the principles of heredity, with special attention to the inheritance of human traits and the improvement of the inborn traits of the race. The work of the course will consist of lectures, readings, reports, and discussions.

NOTE—Courses 223 and 233 may be taken as electives by Sophomores or upperclassmen but do not count in fulfillment of minimum degree requirements in science nor toward a major or minor in Biology.

233. THEORIES OF EVOLUTION. *Spring quarter; five hours; five credits.*

This course deals with the history of the idea of evolution, the facts for which a theory is demanded, the theory of evolution and alternative theories; and with the factors of evolution according to Lamarck, Darwin, and more recent biologists. It is designed for those who have not a specialized acquaintance with Biology. It is desirable but not necessary that this course be preceded by Course 223. See note under that course.

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- Last taught during the 1927-28 school year
- Biology and Human Affairs
  - Introduced in 1936 (second term of the 1935-6 school year)
  - Taught and developed by R.L. Taylor
  - Had no prerequisites and was open to all students, in order to encourage students from outside the Bio department to take it
  - Original description: “A broad cultural course, particularly intended for those not concentrating in Biology. It deals with man's concepts of the universe; the origin of man; human races; the development of science and the scientific attitude; human population movements; man as a social animal; human heredity and capacities for training; eugenics. Each student prepares a term paper. Does not count for concentration in biology.”<sup>10</sup>
  - “Capacities for training” was written about by eugenicists as the opposite of heredity
  - Eventually the name of the course switched to Science and Human Affairs, but the course description stayed the same
  - Last taught in 1947

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<sup>9</sup> “Bulletin: The College of William and Mary in Virginia Catalogue 1922-1923” (Williamsburg: College of William and Mary, 1922), 75.

<sup>10</sup> “Bulletin: The College of William and Mary in Virginia Catalogue 1934-1935” (Williamsburg: College of William and Mary, 1935), 96.

### More on the Teaching of Eugenics at William & Mary

- Before Donald W. Davis came to the college, Professor John W. Ritchie was the main Biology professor, and was also in favor of eugenics.
  - When discussing the contributions of George Oscar Ferguson, a William & Mary alumnus and eugenicist at UVA, Ritchie wrote that mental testing and eugenics, “will effect greater social changes than anything that has come into the world in centuries.”
  - He also said, “The whole negro race practically has proved feeble-minded by white standards.”<sup>11</sup>
- What appears to be the exam questions for the summer 1920 summer course called Eugenics reads as follows:
  1. “(a) State Galton’s definition of Eugenics.  
(b) define : determiner, dysgenic classes, phenotype, moron, euthenics, prenatal culture, racial person, fecundal selection
  2. Describe fully one clear case of alternative inheritance in man.
  3. (a) Does parental alcoholism effect an hereditary modification of the germ plasm?  
(b) Tell what you can of the effect of parental alcoholism on offspring in man and in other animals.
  4. Discuss immigration from (a) Scandinavia and from (b) Italy. Include amount and permanency of the flow, traits introduced and effect upon traits of future Americans.
  5. Discuss the barriers to free marriage selection. Make answer specific and include desirability and method of removing these barriers.
  6. What is the program of the eugenists as stated in text. Include aims and methods.”<sup>12</sup>
- After that course, Davis wrote down his ideas for improving the course in the future. The following are some of his suggestions:
  - He wanted students to use the records of family traits in W.E. Castle’s (Davis’ old professor) *Genetics and Eugenics: A Text-Book for Students of Biology and a Reference Book for Animal and Plant Breeders* and in an unspecified publication of Charles Davenport.

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<sup>11</sup> Gregory Michael Dorr, *Segregation’s Science: Eugenics & Society in Virginia* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008), 85.

<sup>12</sup> Donald W. Davis, “Eugenics,” Box 5, Folder 37, Donald W. Davis Papers, 1916-1950, Swem Special Collections, William & Mary Libraries.

- “Discuss fully characteristics of diff. races. Many students this summer in exam did not know who Scandinavians are and many have wholly distorted ideas of Italians. -making them out to be lacking in thrift, lazy”
- Ideas for textbooks for the course:
  - Something by Thomas Hunt Morgan (but not *Critique of Theory of Evolution*)
  - *Being Well-Born: An Introduction to Eugenics* by Michael F. Guyer
  - Something by Charles Davenport
  - *Applied Eugenics* by Paul Popenoe and Rosewell Hill Johnson
- Questions to be raised in class: “What evidence is there in regard to the eugenic value of racial crosses? Or What is likely to be the eugenic effect of the immigration of the last half century/ Eugenic effect of war.”<sup>13</sup>
- In 1926 The American Social Hygiene Association sent President Chandler a letter about their program for “sex-social education” at colleges. They encouraged W&M to set up a social hygiene committee, as had been done at 202 other schools. They sent Chandler a report on their program. The committee was established, as per the association’s request.
  - It would seem that the letter from the association was forwarded to Davis, who must have organized the committee
  - Notes in the margins say that the physical education, education, home economics, biology, and psychology departments were interested.
  - A note in the margins seems to say that Dr. Hoke, Dean Powell, Mr. Cassady, and Davis were interest in the committee, or perhaps that they were also sent letters from the organization<sup>14</sup>
  - There were more faculty interested than spots on the committee
  - Davis made notes on an outline on ways to present information for “Sex Character Education” within biology and zoology courses, created by the Association.
  - However, Davis was not actually on the committee, because he felt he was on too many committees already.<sup>15</sup>
  - Davis said that he would use the suggestions of the outline in his teaching, which included the following information on eugenics:

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<sup>13</sup> Donald W. Davis, Eugenics Suggestions, Box 5, Folder 37, Donald W. Davis Papers, 1916-1950, Swem Special Collections, William & Mary Libraries.

<sup>14</sup> M. J. Exner to Julian Chandler, November 1, 1926, Box 5, Folder 37, Donald W. Davis Papers, 1916-1950, Swem Special Collections, William & Mary Libraries.

<sup>15</sup> T.W. Galloway, *Tentative Outline Material for Sex Character Education in Courses of Biology and Zoology* (The American Social Hygiene Association, 1926), annotated by Donald W. Davis, Box 5, Folder 37, Donald W. Davis Papers, 1916-1950, Swem Special Collections, William & Mary Libraries.

14. Genetics, Eugenics (See also topic ①. - What determines whether organisms shall have this or that characteristic shown by their parents? Why are we different from our parents? Can we prophecy at all the qualities which the offspring of humans will have from a knowledge of the parents alone? From a knowledge of ancestors for several generations. Are there any types of human beings who should not mate and reproduce? Why? Are there any who should be encouraged to reproduce? In the present state of our knowledge (and ignorance!) can young people get any practical help from science as to the selection of mates from the point of view of securing

well-born offspring? Is this as immediately important for successful marriage and happiness as a study of the knowledge, training, convictions, prejudices, open-mindedness, tastes, habits, skills, interests, ideals, and ambitions of the possible mate? Is disposition a matter of inheritance or of nurture? Is character? (Of course no dogmatic answer is sought to these questions. It is worth while, however, for every college student to know something of both sides of these questions as practical problems; and to understand that both inheritance and environment must be faced and utilized to the best of our understanding.) Conklin: Heredity and Environment. Jennings: Prometheus.

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- The association also sent the committee outlines on the incorporations of sex-social education into classes in education and educational psychology. The committee also requested reports for the subjects of physical education, physiology and hygiene, home economics, and psychology.<sup>17</sup>
- On October 6, 1926, Dr. Eugene L. Swan gave a talk in the Wren chapel to the men of the college on the subject of social hygiene.
  - The visit was arranged by Donald W. Davis, at the request of President Chandler.
  - Dr. Swan gave lectures through the Bureau of Social Hygiene of the State Board of Health.
  - The lecture was only open to men,<sup>18</sup> implying that the lecture touched on sexual social hygiene, which was seen as an important part of maintaining so-called racial hygiene in Virginia.
  - Davis and the committee for sex social education tried and seemingly failed to have Dr. Swan return to the school to speak again.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 9-10.

<sup>17</sup> Donald W. Davis to M.J. Exner, November 17, 1926, Box 5, Folder 37, Donald W. Davis Papers, 1916-1950, Swem Special Collections, William & Mary Libraries.

<sup>18</sup> Donald W. Davis to Dr. Chandler, September 27, 1926, Box 5, Folder 37, Donald W. Davis Papers, 1916-1950, Swem Special Collections, William & Mary Libraries.

- Davis likely distributed the following pamphlet, provided by The Human Betterment Foundation, in 1938:

- [https://docs.google.com/a/email.wm.edu/presentation/d/1zv2pjtbKIE6h8Gxl8Gfs\\_hcDh6ow0b82tJe\\_qJ0stywM/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/a/email.wm.edu/presentation/d/1zv2pjtbKIE6h8Gxl8Gfs_hcDh6ow0b82tJe_qJ0stywM/edit?usp=sharing)<sup>19</sup>

Donald W. Davis

- Biographical Information and education
  - Biology Professor at William & Mary 1916-1950 and head of the Biology department
  - Specialized in botany, zoology and genetics
  - Bachelor of Art in 1905 and Ph.D. in 1913, both from Harvard
    - At Harvard he worked under William E. Castle and East.<sup>20</sup>
    - Castle and East, “taught the second generation of American geneticists” and directed the Bussey Institution at Harvard,<sup>21</sup> where Davis presumably studied.
    - Castle was an influential geneticist who taught a course called “Genetics and Eugenics” (Davis also taught a summer course with the same name) He argued against race mixing and wrote about superior and inferior races.<sup>22</sup>
    - Edward M. East was a botanist and a eugenicist that argued against racial mixing because it would sully the white race. He wrote in his 1919 book called *Inbreeding and Outbreeding* about the ways in which “the negro is inferior to the white.” He also warned against the genetic undesirability of immigrants<sup>23</sup>
    - Presumably, Davis was classmates with Orland Emile White, as they both studied with Castle and East and received their Ph.D and doctorate, respectively, in 1913.<sup>24</sup> White was the leading geneticist in UVA’s biology department and part of its cohort of eugenicists.<sup>25</sup>
  - Also taught at Sweet Briar (1907-9), Radcliffe College (1909-12), Clark College (1912-14), and DePauw University (1914-1916)<sup>26</sup>
- Memberships & Communications with Eugenics Organizations, etc.
  - Davis’s papers contain communications with several eugenics organizations.
  - In September 1921 Davis attended the International Congress of Eugenics in New York<sup>27</sup>

<sup>19</sup> *Human Sterilization Today*, (Pasadena: Human Betterment Foundation, 1938).

<sup>20</sup> Dorr, *Segregation’s Science*, 246.

<sup>21</sup> Dorr, *Segregation’s Science*, 89.

<sup>22</sup> Adam S. Cohen, “Harvard’s Eugenics Era: When academics embraced scientific racism, immigration restrictions, and the suppression of “the unfit,” *Harvard Magazine*, March-April 2016, accessed June 24, 2016, <http://harvardmagazine.com/2016/03/harvards-eugenics-era>.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>26</sup> See William & Mary Course Bulletins from the period.

<sup>27</sup> Donald Davis to W. J. Crozier, Sept. 17, 1921, Box 1, Folder 4, Donald W. Davis Papers, 1916-1950, Swem Special Collections, William & Mary Libraries.

- In 1927 Davis was appointed to the Virginia Eugenics Committee, a part of the American Eugenics Society, Inc.
  - The chairman, who appointed Davis, was H.E. Jordan, a leading UVA eugenicist.
  - Davis was one of the original members, along with Ivey Lewis and J.S. Horsley
  - “The purpose of the committee is to do propoganda and legislative work in the state”<sup>28</sup>
- Later in 1927, Davis became an official member or the American Eugenics Society
  - The letter inviting him to join described the organization as representing, “the only concerted activity for the actual improvement of social and racial conditions by attacking these problems at their source. Applied eugenics will mean the greatest happiness to the greatest number, and in this surely you are interested.”<sup>29</sup>
- August 24-31, 1932 Davis attended the Sixth International Congress of Genetics at Cornell University and presented on Balsam Heredity
  - Most of the programing dealt with actual, scientific animal and plant genetics, but prominent eugenicists also attended
  - Charles Davenport, a leader of the eugenics movement, presented a paper on Thursday and Davis underlined Davenport’s name in the program, presumably because he wanted to be sure not to miss the lecture
  - Also underlined are names of Rollins A. Emerson, H.J. Muller, Henry Crampton (a founder of the American Eugenics Society), C.C. Hurst, P.W. and Anna R. Whiting, Oscar Riddle, and many other eugenicists (among others)
  - The program never mentions eugenics, but there are clearly many eugenicists presenting, though usually with vague headings like “General Genetics”, or “General Program”, but also “Human Genetics” <sup>30</sup>
  - Davis had several blank Student Membership Application Forms for graduate students to attend the Congress<sup>31</sup>
  - The previous meeting of this Congress was held in Berlin in 1927.
  - From the announcement of the 6th Congress: “Without neglecting fundamental genetic research, it is nevertheless recognized that genetics in its practical applications to breeding and to human race problems, deserves an adequate place on the program of the Congress. Symposia dealing with

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<sup>28</sup> Rosewell H. Johnson to Donald W. Davis, June 22, 1927, Box 5, Folder 37, Donald W. Davis Papers, 1916-1950, Swem Special Collections, William & Mary Libraries.

<sup>29</sup> Leon F. Whitney to Donald W. Davis, November 15, 1927, Box 5, Folder 37, Donald W. Davis Papers, 1916-1950, Swem Special Collections, William & Mary Libraries.

<sup>30</sup> *Sixth International Congress of Genetics Preliminary Program* (Ithaca: Congress of Genetics, July 1932), Box 3, Folder 6, Donald W. Davis Papers, 1916-1950, Swem Special Collections, William & Mary Libraries.

<sup>31</sup> “Student Membership Application Form”, Box 3, Folder 6, Donald W. Davis Papers, 1916-1950, Swem Special Collections, William & Mary Libraries.



these problems will make these features of the Congress of exceptional interest to all workers in the biological and social sciences.”<sup>32</sup>

- The Third International Congress of Eugenics met just before the Genetics Congress, August 21-23, 1932 in New York City so that people could attend both congresses<sup>33</sup> It is not clear whether Davis attended the Eugenics Congress as well, but it does not seem so, though he would have been in the area and had attended in previous years.
- William & Mary was invited to be an institutional member of the Sixth International Congress of Genetics. It is not clear whether or not they accepted.<sup>34</sup>
- Davis actually spend the majority of that summer at Cornell, preparing for his exhibit at the Congress.
- Davis was a member of the Genetics Society of America, which had its first meeting in December 1932. Davis had a description of the meeting in his papers, but it is not apparent whether or not he attended or what was discussed<sup>35</sup>
- In 1938 The Human Betterment Foundation sent Davis a copy of a pamphlet entitled “Human Sterilization Today” in the hopes that he would order more to, “use in your classes or elsewhere for educational purposes.”<sup>36</sup>
  - Davis ordered 30 copies.<sup>37</sup>
  - The pamphlets were intended to present the “real facts” on human sterilization and combat the fact that, “Current literature contains so much that is erroneous, radical, and misleading on human sterilization.”<sup>38</sup>
- The Virginia Academy of Sciences and conflict with the Anglo Saxon Clubs
  - Davis was involved in the founding of the Virginia Academy of Scientists in Williamsburg in 1923, along with many of the prominent eugenicists from UVA. The group never came out against the radically racist eugenic rhetoric of the Anglo Saxon Clubs of America (of which there was a chapter at William & Mary as of 1923<sup>39</sup>), and rarely addressed eugenics, which caused the public to perceive them as approving of the actions of Plecker and company. But Davis was passionate about

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<sup>32</sup> *Genetics Congress Quarterly*, June 1930, Vol. 1 No. 1., Box 3, Folder 6, Donald W. Davis Papers, 1916-1950, Swem Special Collections, William & Mary Libraries.

<sup>33</sup> *Genetics Congress Quarterly*, December 1930, Vol. 1 No. 3., Box 3, Folder 6, Donald W. Davis Papers, 1916-1950, Swem Special Collections, William & Mary Libraries

<sup>34</sup> C.C. Little to President J.A.C. Chandler, June 5, 1931, Box 3, Folder 6, Donald W. Davis Papers, 1916-1950, Swem Special Collections, William & Mary Libraries.

<sup>35</sup> “First Annual Meeting of the Genetics Society of America,” November 1, 1932, and “Genetics Society of America Membership List, Box 3, Folder 7, Donald W. Davis Papers, 1916-1950, Swem Special Collections, William & Mary Libraries.

<sup>36</sup> E.S. Gosney to Donald W. Davis, November 9, 1938, Box 5, Folder 37, Donald W. Davis Papers, 1916-1950, Swem Special Collections, William & Mary Libraries.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Dorr, Segregation’s Science, 143.

casting the conversation about Eugenics in a more scientific and less sensational light in response to the ASCOA.<sup>40</sup>

- Attempt to advise the committee on race relations of the Virginia state legislature
  - In January 1925, Davis and faculty from the Medical College of Virginia organized a group to try to diffuse tensions at the committee on race relations and convince them that Plecker, Cox, and Powell's approaches are unscientific and that true science, not radicalism should be used to justify and inform the eugenics program of the state.<sup>41</sup>
  - The group wanted to assist as consultants or advisors with a study of the racial situation of Virginia to, "be done in a scientific spirit."<sup>42</sup>
- At the 1925 annual meeting, Davis organized, "a symposium on human heredity with special reference to our racial problems in Virginia."
  - However, a few weeks after he started to organize the symposium, he was told by Mr. Rudd that there would not be time for the symposium that that year's meeting. He wanted the subject to, "be made the central feature of the meeting of the Academy for next year."<sup>43</sup> It seems that that never happened. He communicated with several top eugenicists asking for papers before the symposium was cancelled.
  - Davis did not use the word "eugenics" in his description of the planned symposium.<sup>44</sup>
  - This was soon after the passage of the Eugenic Sterilization Act and during the beginnings of its test case, *Buck v. Bell*.
  - Davis' outline of the planned symposium: "My idea is that we shall have one paper to present elementary facts of heredity, something in the manner of Davenport's 'Heredity and Relationships to Eugenics', followed by a paper perhaps on the characteristics of the negro and the Indian contrasted with those of the white race; a paper dealing with inheritance of feeble-mindedness and anti-social traits, etc."
  - He wrote, "It is hoped that many of the teachers of science in the high schools of the State will be present at this meeting, and through them, we hope to spread throughout the State quite widely information bearing on these problems which are now being agitated under the leadership of the Anglo Saxon League."<sup>45</sup>
  - R. Bennett Bean, a UVA anatomist and eugenicist wrote to Davis, "Whatever we do we should avoid any Madison Grant or Stoddard stuff. Make it truly

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 156-7.

<sup>41</sup> Dorr, *Segregation's Science*, 156-57. And E.C.L. Miller to Donald W. Davis, January 28 (year not specified), Box 5, Folder 37, Donald W. Davis Papers, 1916-1950, Swem Special Collections, William & Mary Libraries.

<sup>42</sup> E.C.L. Miller to Donald W. Davis.

<sup>43</sup> Donald W. Davis, *Donald W. Davis to George O. Ferguson*, March 25, 1925, Box 5, Folder 37, Donald W. Davis Papers, 1916-1950, Swem Special Collections, William & Mary Libraries.

<sup>44</sup> Dorr, *Segregation's Science*, 157.

<sup>45</sup> Donald W. Davis, "Donald W. Davis to Professor H.H. Goddard," March 7, 1925, Box 5, Folder 37, Donald W. Davis Papers, 1916-1950, Swem Special Collections, William & Mary Libraries.

scientific, and yet of interest to the public, and it may be worth while." The goal of the symposium was to emphasize the "scientific" nature of eugenics and counteract the extremism of some eugenicists like Madison Grant and Lothrop Stoddard. Bean also said that they might include, "A demonstration that the Nordic is a myth, more or less," in reference to Grant's Nordic Theory, which was detailed in his 1916 book *The Passing of the Great Race*, an extremely influential work of scientific racism.

- The Anglo Saxon League prompted an "enthusiastic" rather than scientific "point of view" on Nordic Theory, which this symposium hoped to combat.<sup>46</sup>
  - In response to Davis' request for papers on the subject, Arthur H. Estabrook (a physician who had worked at the Eugenics Records Office who would eventually give the expert testimony upon which the Supreme Court's *Buck v. Bell* decision was based<sup>47</sup>) offered to read, "a paper on the biological and sociological problems in connection with the negro-indian-white crosses in the State." He also said, suggesting further topics of discussion for the symposium, "The recent sterilization law and its test case might be of interest to the group."<sup>48</sup>
  - Bean, the anatomy department chair of UVA who wrote an influential publication that attempted to prove a qualitative difference between the brains of African- and Anglo-Americans,<sup>49</sup> wrote to Davis, "I have a paper, on a four dimensional table for the presentation of four arrays of factors with especial reference to the relation of the weight of the heart, liver spleen and kidneys to race, sex, age, stature, nourishment and acute chronic diseases, that I would like to present at the meeting."
  - George Oscar Ferguson, a William & Mary alumnus and eugenicist at UVA, offered to present a paper, "on whites & negroes, also Indians, from a psychological point of view,"<sup>50</sup> or, as Davis more directly phrased it in his letter requesting the paper, "a comparison of the negro and white races (Indians also if information is available) as the the (sic) mental traits and capabilities." This comparison would serve, "as a reasonable basis for differential treatment of the races in the State."<sup>51</sup>
- Davis suggested having the newly-formed Virginia Eugenics Committee present at the May 1927 Virginia Academy of Science, saying that there has been interest in

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<sup>46</sup> George Oscar Ferguson to Donald W. Davis, March 10, 1925, Box 5, Folder 37, Donald W. Davis Papers, 1916-1950, Swem Special Collections, William & Mary Libraries.

<sup>47</sup> "Buck V. Bell," "Timeline," *Eugenics Archive*, accessed July 29, 2016, <http://eugenicsarchive.ca/discover/timeline/525f76dcc6813a5469000018>.

<sup>48</sup> Arthur H. Estabrook to Donald W. Davis, March 11, 1925, Box 5, Folder 37, Donald W. Davis Papers, 1916-1950, Swem Special Collections, William & Mary Libraries.

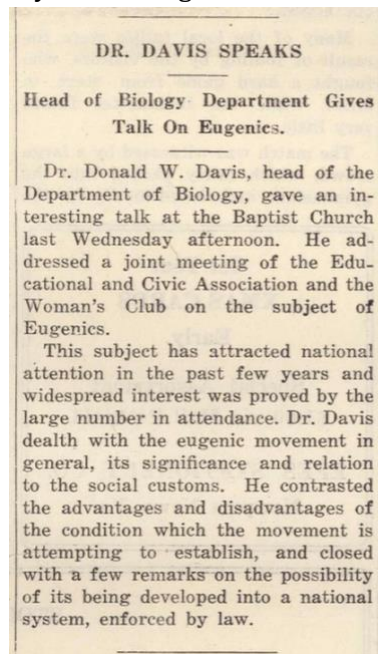
<sup>49</sup> Dorr, *Segregation's Science*, 77-79.

<sup>50</sup> George Oscar Ferguson to Donald W. Davis, 1925, Box 5, Folder 37, Donald W. Davis Papers, 1916-1950, Swem Special Collections, William & Mary Libraries.

<sup>51</sup> Donald W. Davis to George Oscar Ferguson, March 6, 1925, Box 5, Folder 37, Donald W. Davis Papers, 1916-1950, Swem Special Collections, William & Mary Libraries.

having presentations on eugenics before the academy, but that that had not yet happened.<sup>52</sup>

- Davis was president of the Virginia Academy of Sciences 1927-28<sup>53</sup>
- Davis again wanted to discuss eugenics at the 1928 annual meeting held in Williamsburg, during his time as president, but H.E. Jordan and Ivey Lewis thought, “that the time is not quite opportune for allocation of any considerable part of the program of the annual meeting of the Virginia Academy of Science to the subject to Eugenics. I do not think I shall want to present the subject at all this year.”<sup>54</sup>
- The April 26-28, 1923 Organizational meeting of the Academy was also held at William & Mary. Davis was vice-president of the related Association of Virginia Biologists<sup>55</sup> and chairman of Williamsburg’s local committee<sup>56</sup>
- Davis’ writings, lectures, etc.
  - From the Flat Hat in 1921: Davis gives a speech to the Educational and Civic Association and the Women’s Club on Eugenics. He discussed the possibility of a national system of eugenics laws.



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<sup>52</sup> Donald W. Davis to H.G. Jordan, July 19, 1927, Box 5, Folder 37, Donald W. Davis Papers, 1916-1950, Swem Special Collections, William & Mary Libraries.

<sup>53</sup> “The Virginia Academy of Science”, 1948-9, Box 6, Folder 29, Donald W. Davis Papers, 1916-1950, Swem Special Collections, William & Mary Libraries

<sup>54</sup> H.E. Jordan to Donald W. Davis, February 15, 1928, Box 5, Folder 37, Donald W. Davis Papers, 1916-1950, Swem Special Collections, William & Mary Libraries.

<sup>55</sup> “Meeting for Organization of Virginia Academy of Science/College of William & Mary, April 23-28, 1923./Announcement of Local Committee”, Box 6, Folder 31, Donald W. Davis Papers, 1916-1950, Swem Special Collections, William & Mary Libraries

<sup>56</sup> Donald W. Davis to Virginia Academy of Science, May 18, 1923, Box 6, Folder 31, Donald W. Davis Papers, 1916-1950, Swem Special Collections, William & Mary Libraries

<sup>57</sup> “Dr. Davis Speaks,” *The Flat Hat*, January 15, 1921.

- He resented a paper called, “Inheritance in Impatients” at the 1921 annual meeting of the Association of Virginia Biologists, held at UVA<sup>58</sup>
- He wrote a paper, presumably in 1921, called “Mental Defectives in Virginia” wherein he argued that Virginia’s Compulsory Education Bill would be a detriment to most students by making the incompetent study with the competent. The paper also praised the system of having schools identify feeble-minded children and explained the other laws related to the segregation of the “feeble-minded.”<sup>59</sup> It is unclear where or if this paper was published.
- Davis presented his “Genetics and Orthodontia” at The Eastern Association of Graduates of the Angle School of Orthodontia Regular Meeting on March 24, 1923 in Norfolk.<sup>60</sup>
  - Most of the paper is a basic introduction to genetics and eugenics
  - His idea is that dentists and orthodontists should take up the responsibility of helping to disseminate information on heredity, because of their close relationship with patients and the fact that their patients are likely to be in less distress than someone on a visit to their physician<sup>61</sup>

#### Traces of the Eugenics Movement in courses in other Departments

- The psychology department had a course called Genetic Psychology
  - The description of the course seems innocuous, reading, “A study of the beginnings and development of intellect in animal and child life, the dominant activities at different stages of development and their educational significance,”<sup>62</sup> but given the title, it was likely influenced by the eugenics movement.
  - Taught from 1908 to 1915
- Principles of Sociology
  - The 1929 description reads, “Nature and analysis of the life of society ; social evolution population ; factors in social progress ; social forces and processes problems of social control and organization ; influence of geographical conditions, rural and urban life, distribution of wealth, heredity, and environment, on social progress,”<sup>63</sup> listing heredity as a factor contributing towards or against social progress.

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<sup>58</sup> “State Biologists Assemble: Profs. Grimes and Davis Present Papers at Annual Meeting,” *The Flat Hat*, January 22, 1921.

<sup>59</sup> Donald W. Davis, “Mental Defectives in Virginia, Box 4, Folder 16, Donald W. Davis Papers, 1916-1950, Swem Special Collections, William & Mary Libraries

<sup>60</sup> “The Eastern Association of Graduates of the Angle School of Orthodontia/ A Regular Meeting Saturday, March 24 Nineteen Twenty-three”, Box 4, Folder 32, Donald W. Davis Papers, 1916-1950, Swem Special Collections, William & Mary Libraries

<sup>61</sup> Donald W. Davis, “Genetics and Orthodontia,” 1923, Box 2, Folder 20, Donald W. Davis Papers, 1916-1950, Swem Special Collections, William & Mary Libraries.

<sup>62</sup> “Bulletin: The College of William and Mary in Virginia Catalogue 1911-1912” (Williamsburg: College of William and Mary, 1912), 60.

<sup>63</sup> “Bulletin: The College of William and Mary in Virginia Catalogue 1928-1929” (Williamsburg: College of William and Mary, 1929), 188.

- Before 1928, the class' description was much shorter and did not mention heredity. The class was cancelled the year after the description changed.
- Social Problems
  - Listed under both economics and sociology
  - Description published in 1929: "Immigration and the race problem, Americanization, poverty, crime, with special attention given to the family, the state, the church, and the school, as major social institutions."<sup>64</sup>
  - Description published in 1930: The nature of social problems will be emphasized in this course. It will include a study of the biological, psychological, and sociological aspects of the population problem. Special emphasis will be given to race pride and prejudice, international population movements, inequality of wealth and knowledge, and to the factors affecting social adjustments."<sup>65</sup>
  - Taught 1930 to the 1936-7 school year.
- Race Relations
  - Taught by Professor Blocker
  - 1937 Description: "Origins, distinctions and differences in races. Interpretation of race prejudices, race antagonisms and race adjustments in the United States."<sup>66</sup>
- Human Ecology
  - Taught by Professor Holt
  - A sociology class listed under the topic of Demography and Human Ecology
  - 1937 description: "Competition in its various forms as a factor in the spatial distribution and social differentiation among human beings."<sup>67</sup>
- Social Problems and Social Legislation
  - Taught by Professor Holt
  - Applied Sociology
  - 1937 description: "Problems of population, housing, poverty, the dependency and care of the aged, sick, feeble-minded, insane, the criminal, and the delinquent child. Public policy and legislation with reference to these problems."<sup>68</sup>
- The college operated the Richmond School of Social Work and Public Health

#### William & Mary and Eugenic Policy

- As stated earlier in this outline, Davis was involved in an attempt to advise the Virginia legislature's committee on race relations on scientific approaches to eugenics
- In 1920, William & Mary assisted the state penitentiary in plans to institute an educational program for inmates.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> "Bulletin: The College of William and Mary in Virginia Catalogue 1929-1930" (Williamsburg: College of William and Mary, 1930), 158.

<sup>66</sup> "Bulletin: The College of William and Mary in Virginia Catalogue 1936-1937" (Williamsburg: College of William and Mary, 1937), 149.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

- At the same time, Dean Kremer Jacob Hoke and Donald W. Davis were appointed members of the Governor's Advisory Board on Criminal Mental Hygiene, which would "conduct an intensive study of the mental condition of each inmate at the prison."<sup>69</sup>
- The board likely only operated until late 1921.<sup>70</sup>

#### Potential Questions for Further Research

- What kind of eugenical leanings did John W. Ritchie, Professor of Biology before Davis, have?
- How involved was Dean Kremer Jacob Hoke in the eugenics movement?
- How did the eugenics movement influence the Richmond extension division School of Public Health and Social Work?
- What were the eugenical leanings of professors in other departments?
- Did any students of Donald W. Davis go on to have influential positions deciding eugenic policy?
- Where did Davis publish his paper on "Mental Defectives in Virginia" and was it or any of his other publications particularly influential?
- What kind of involvement did Professor Holt of the Sociology department have with the eugenics movement?
- Did any of Davis' students go on to put their knowledge of eugenics to influential use?

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<sup>69</sup> "War on Disease and Ignorance in State's Prison," *Richmond Times-Dispatch* (Richmond, VA), September 8, 1920.

<sup>70</sup> [Illegible signature] to Donald W. Davis, December 13, 1921, Box 2, Folder 16, Donald W. Davis Papers, 1916-1950, Swem Special Collections, William & Mary Libraries.