

HIU33124 Genetics, Genealogy and History

This module explores the relationship between genetics, genealogy, and historical thinking from the nineteenth century to the present. It examines how ideas of racial science, inheritance, and identity have been shaped by both scientific developments and historical practices. Beginning with the contemporary phenomenon of genetic ancestry testing and online “reveals” of affiliative ethnic identities, the course traces the long history of genealogy as a social, intellectual, and political practice.

The module examines the rise of genealogical research among nineteenth-century elites, the development of anthropometric science and eugenics, and the role of hereditary thinking in the construction of modern nation states. It also considers the democratisation of family history in the twentieth century and the profound transformation brought about by consumer genomics. By the end of the module, students will be able to evaluate genealogy as both a historical practice and a cultural technology, and assess the political and ethical implications of the genomic turn in the study of human history.