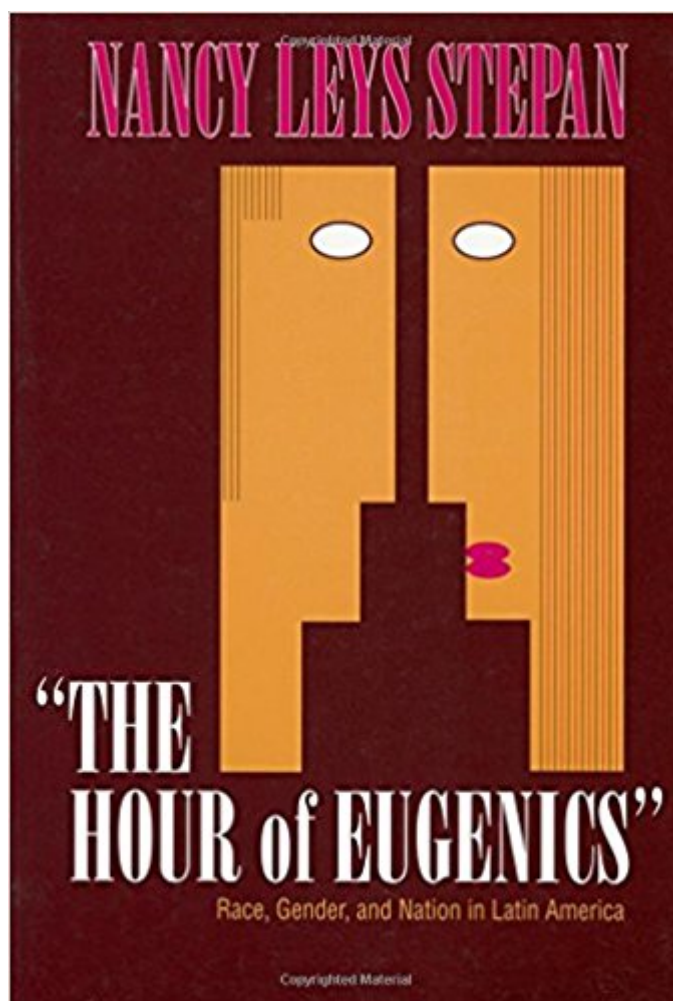


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The Hour Of Eugenics": Race, Gender, And Nation In Latin America



Synopsis

Eugenics was a term coined in 1883 to name the scientific and social theory which advocated "race improvement" through selective human breeding. In Europe and the United States the eugenics movement found many supporters before it was finally discredited by its association with the racist ideology of Nazi Germany. Examining for the first time how eugenics was taken up by scientists and social reformers in Latin America, Nancy Leys Stepan compares the eugenics movements in Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina with the more familiar cases of Britain, the United States, and Germany. In this highly original account, Stepan sheds new light on the role of science in reformulating issues of race, gender, reproduction, and public health in an era when the focus on national identity was particularly intense. Drawing upon a rich body of evidence concerning the technical publications and professional meetings of Latin American eugenicists, she examines how they adapted eugenic principles to local contexts between the world wars. Stepan shows that Latin American eugenicists diverged considerably from their counterparts in Europe and the United States in their ideological approach and their interpretations of key texts concerning heredity.

Book Information

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"This book serves as an important corrective to the myopic vision underlying much of the older historiography of the movement. . . . A sophisticated, non-reductionist treatment of an important topic. . . . A splendid book." *Journal of the History of Medicine* "In a thoughtful and carefully researched book, Nancy Stepan examines the political, cultural, and scientific roles of eugenics in Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico from the 1910s through the 1940s. . . . She skillfully shows the

ideological dualities resulting from eugenic practices. . . . An excellent addition to the literature on eugenics and the history of science in Latin America." *Medical History* "Stepan's warning regarding the politics of scientific interpretation in the future seems most appropriate. . . . This is an important book, meticulously done, and will be of significant value to Latin Americanists (especially Brazilianists), to historians of science and medicine and to those concerned with the history of ideas as well as those interested in the rise (and fall?) of eugenics." *American Historical Review* "Race is the primary focus in Nancy Leys Stepan's fascinating account of the fortunes of eugenic ideas and policies in the racially mixed setting of Latin America. . . . Stepan has now made a significant contribution to an international picture of the development of race and population policies. It is particularly useful in showing the remarkable plasticity of racist discourses on reproduction." *Signs*

This book addresses the scientific and social movement known as eugenics, a word invented in 1883 (from the Greek *eugenes*, meaning 'wellborn') by the British scientist Francis Galton to encompass the social uses to which knowledge of heredity could be put in order to achieve the goal of 'better breeding'.

I used this book for a senior thesis paper. It was a good starting point for an overview of eugenics in Latin America. The downside to this book is that most of the information is a little old and a lot more has been written. What I really like about this book is that it lead me to other sources.

I still haven't finished reading, but I can tell already that the book is a very professional work of research.

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