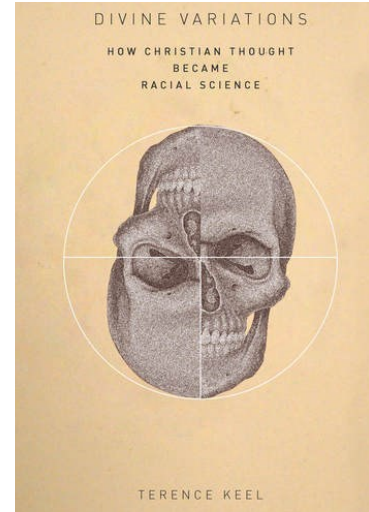


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The Ghost in the Machine: How Christianity Haunts the Biological Sciences



The idea that so-called races reflect inherent biological differences between social groups has been a prominent aspect of Western thought since at least the Enlightenment. While there have been efforts to refute this way of thinking—most notably, the social constructionist thesis emerging as a dominant framework in the aftermath of WWII—fixed biological conceptions of race haunt new genetic technologies, where race is thought to be measurable at the molecular level. Yet the resilience of this naturalized understanding of race may stem less from overtly political or pernicious motives on the part of scientists and more from our inherited theological traditions that continue to shape and direct scientific reasoning. In this talk, Keel argues that the enduring belief that race comes from “Nature” reflects the haunting influence of Christian intellectual history on the development of modern scientific thinking about human ancestry. Keel suggests this perhaps unavoidable convergence of science and religion has consequences for our ability to recognize how society—not “Nature”—produces and maintains human biological differences.



Terence Keel is Associate Professor of History and Vice Chair at UCSB. He holds a joint appointment in the Department of Black Studies. He received his BA from Xavier University, his Master of Theological Studies from the Harvard Divinity School, and his PhD from Harvard University. His book, Divine Variations: How Christian Thought Became Racial Science, has just been published by the Stanford University Press. He was the 2017 recipient of the Harold J. Plous Award, the highest honor given by the UCSB faculty senate to a junior professor for excellence in teaching, scholarship and service. Among his current research projects is an examination of how geneticists use ancient DNA to craft narratives about the health and behavior of contemporary populations.

Goleta Branch Library —500 North Fairview Ave, Goleta 2 pm, Feb. 18, 2018

The Ghost in the Machine — Goleta Branch Library — February 18, 2018, 2:00 pm

Please reserve ____ space(s) \$5 (members and guests); __\$7 (non-members); \$3 (students). Detach at dotted line and mail check payable to **UCSB History Associates**, History Dept., UCSB, 93106-9410 (or leave a message at 1-805-300-4016; or e-mail jsmcgee@history.ucsb.edu) by Feb. 14.

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