



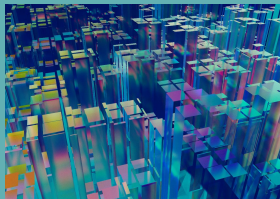
CENTER FOR
GENETICS
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BioPolitical

News&Views

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SPOTLIGHT



Is AI the End of the World as We Know It?

Pete Shanks, *Biopolitical Times* | 09.24.2026

The “AI doomer” narrative distracts from concrete, observable harms caused by AI right now. It also obscures the financial incentives and ideological motivations that spur Silicon Valley’s prophets of AI doom to continue developing the same technologies they worry about.

ANNOUNCEMENTS



Eugenics and the Nihilism of Law-and-Order Politics

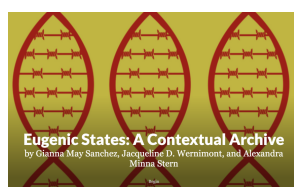
Terence Keel, *LA Review of Books* | 09.06.2026

In the 16th installment of the CGS-supported **Legacies of Eugenics** series, Terence Keel shows how eugenics paves the way for “biomedical nihilism,” or the assumption that the premature deaths of marginalized—or “inferior”—people are “natural and inevitable.” This idea is used to downplay police murders of Black people and to justify divestment of state resources from social programs.



Welcome, Aariya!

CGS’ fall intern, Aariya Shergill, joins us through UC Berkeley’s Health Services Internship Program. Aariya is a third-year student at UC Berkeley studying Genetics and Plant Biology, with a concentration in Biotechnology. She is particularly interested in how emerging biotechnologies can be regulated and developed in ways that promote health equity and social justice.



Eugenic States: A Contextual Archive

A new digital storytelling project hosted by Dartmouth University provides accessible resources on the history of the eugenics movement and its effects, including specific archival research on eugenics in Indiana,

WHAT WE'RE READING

GENE EDITING AND GENE THERAPY | EUGENICS SURROGACY | ASSISTED REPRODUCTION | VARIOUS

GENE EDITING AND GENE THERAPY

'Epigenetic' editing is here: gene-tagging technique banishes hepatitis B virus

Miryam Naddaf, *Nature* | 09.21.2026

In animal trials, an epigenetic therapy for chronic Hepatitis B therapy seemed to shut down its gene activity and prevent it from producing viral particles. Another therapy seems to "silence" the Hepatitis B virus and led to its repression for 17 months. More trials are needed to see if the technique can produce a functional cure without off-target epigenetic effects or concerning side effects.

The Next Gene-Editing Technology May Also Be the Oldest

Carl Zimmer, *The New York Times* | 09.17.2026

Researchers may have found a new gene-editing defense in viruses, which they are calling VIPR. An "evolutionary ancestor" of CRISPR, this newly discovered system is smaller and appears to be able to target more genetic sequences.

Can Geneticists Fight Disease by Targeting 'Nurture' Instead of 'Nature'?

Emily Baumgaertner Nunn, *The New York Times* | 09.08.2026

Epigenome editing aims to change how genes are expressed, rather than editing genes directly. Targeting the epigenome, which already changes in response to external factors like stress, diet, and exposure to toxins, could allow researchers to "tune" genetic expression instead of permanently editing genes themselves.

China deaths reignite debate about using viruses to deliver CRISPR therapies

Ryan Cross, *Endpoints News* | 09.02.2026

The deaths of two children in China who received gene-edited therapies delivered through adeno-associated viruses (AAVs) have spurred alarm that these viral vectors are too risky for use in gene therapies. Critics suggest that rushing delivery of gene therapies raises serious risks, but the lack of details from the studies in China make it difficult to ascertain whether AAVs were the cause of the children's deaths.

How Much Is That Gene-Edited Dog in the Window?

Emily Anthes, *The New York Times* | 08.31.2026

Attempts to genetically engineer hypoallergenic dogs should prompt us to scrutinize the potential negative health consequences of human intervention in canine reproduction. Historically, human creation of modern dog breeds has resulted in the proliferation of inherited diseases detrimental to dogs' welfare. Gene editing could bring further risks.

EUGENICS

Racist pseudo-science still shapes Australian politics

Marcia Langton, *National Indigenous Times* | 09.22.2026

Race science and eugenics were never neutral biologies; these dangerous political ideologies were rooted in colonialism and racism. Australia's history of eugenics is clear in early 20th century mainstream anatomical science and persists in contemporary media outlets' willingness to tolerate politicians' peddling of eugenic pseudoscience.

Embryo screening and the new reproductive divide

Gaia Ghirardi, Arno Van Hoetegem, and K. Paige Harden, *Nature Human Behaviour* | 09.21.2026

The commercialization of pre-implantation polygenic testing and embryo selection “presents a new source of stigma and pressure for parents and will widen reproductive inequalities, regardless of whether it can deliver the results that customers are seeking.”

Education for Motherhood

Anna L. Philippe, *Pop Panic* | 09.17.2026

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, eugenics was taught as a legitimate science in colleges and universities, in part through classes for women on “family development.” Recent proposals for similar courses draw on eugenic logics to advance the idea that educated women are to blame for lower birth rates.

“Ghost in the Machine” Is a Documentary — but It’s Also an Urgent Technological Horror Story

Erik Adams, *Sundance* | 09.08.2026

A new documentary exposes the eugenicist and racist views of men who paved the way for the development of Silicon Valley, and it shows how the same distortions are behind today's tech billionaires' AI creations.

SURROGACY

Supreme Court Order Gives Parents Custody of Baby in Surrogacy Fight

Ann E. Marimow and J. David Goodman, *The New York Times* | 09.22.2026

In the high-profile surrogacy custody dispute spanning Alaska, Texas, and California, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan denied the surrogate McKenna West's request to block a lower court's order, which had granted custody of the child to the intended parents. The intended parents plan to continue the infant's medical care in California.

The Journey

Ava Kofman, *The New Yorker* | 09.15.2026

A five-part audio series investigates a recent high-profile surrogacy scandal. It follows a surrogate's discovery that she is carrying a child for a couple who have already had many children through several surrogates, which leads to a police investigation of the alleged child abuse and custody disputes over some of the children.

Who Gets to Decide? Race, Surrogacy and Bodily Autonomy

Gay Pasley, *Essence* | 09.04.2026

The McKenna West case shows how bodily autonomy and custody rights are different issues. Surrogacy contracts should not be seen as overriding a surrogate's bodily autonomy and informed consent, especially when we consider dynamics of racism and sexism, as well as historical and ongoing violations of Black women's bodily autonomy.

ASSISTED REPRODUCTION

Egg freezing is not reproductive insurance – so what does 'success' really mean?

Kylie Baldwin and Stuart Lavery, *BioNews* | 09.14.2026

Research highlights ongoing challenges in informing prospective egg-freezers in the UK about the procedure, in part because clinics advertise it as “reproductive insurance.” As the popularity of the procedure grows, it is important that those having their eggs retrieved and frozen understand its costs, risks, and likelihood of success.

She Got a Great Deal on Egg Freezing. Then She Spiraled

Maia Hibbett, *Wired* | 09.09.2026

Cofertility advertises free egg freezing for women willing to donate half of their retrieved eggs to the company, which then sells them to intended parents seeking eggs for their own IVF procedures. Women who underwent egg freezing with Cofertility discovered that the company didn't disclose drawbacks of egg sharing, failed to communicate truthfully about donor-matching, and collected massive amounts of data from donors and potential donors.

High Fertility Costs Push Americans Abroad for IVF Treatment

LJ Dawson, *KFF Health News* | 08.28.2026

An increasing number of Americans are heading overseas for cheaper fertility treatments. Egg retrieval and IVF in countries like Greece and Spain are much cheaper than the same treatments in the United States, despite Trump's repeated promises to lower the cost of IVF. Medical care abroad carries risks and remains financially unrealistic for many Americans, however.

VARIOUS

US military had close call after using AI for false intelligence report, sources say

Katie Bo Lillis and Zachary Cohen, *CNN* | 09.18.2026

The US military narrowly avoided starting a war after preparing to act on “intelligence” that was actually AI hallucination. A US Special Operations Command analyst submitted an “entirely false” AI-assisted report, which falsely claimed that a Chinese ship was transporting “components of a nuclear weapons program” in the Middle East.

Mice with human brain cells open a new testing ground for drugmakers to study disease

Karen Weintraub, *Endpoints News* | 09.16.2026

Researchers replaced missing cortex and hippocampus cells in specially bred rodents with human brain cells. They plan to study the resulting “human-mouse chimera” to learn more about the activity of human brain cells and the development of brain diseases.

U.S. Health Officials Move Quickly to Deploy Medical A.I. Despite Concerns

Christina Jewett, *The New York Times* | 09.14.2026

The Trump administration is speeding ahead to integrate AI in medical care. The Department of Health and Human services is funding pilot projects that use AI agents to diagnose ailments and prescribe treatments without thorough assessment of the safety and effectiveness of the tools.

If you've read this far, you clearly care about the fight to reclaim human biotechnologies for the common good. Thank you!

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