The Center for Black Studies Research Presents

Race in Mind: A Sufficiency Test of the Alliance Hypothesis of Race

FEBRUARY 27TH | 4:00-5:30 PM

We are excited to welcome Dr. Dan Conroy-Beam, an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He joined UCSB after receiving his PhD from the University of Texas at Austin in 2016. Dan's work combines computer simulations with behavioral data to understand how our psychologies create and navigate complex social systems. He primarily works in the area of romantic relationships (e.g., how do people choose their romantic partners? How do they navigate their relationships once initiated?), but he has also worked on topics spanning from friendship, to religion, to racial discrimination.

"Race, as we understand it, has potent social reality but no biological reality. The incredible salience poses somewhat of a psychological puzzle: how and why is the human mind so capable of creating and perceiving something that didn't truly exist in the first place? Here, I will present work using a series of computer simulations to provide a sufficiency test of the so-called "alliance hypothesis" of race. These simulations demonstrate that a psychology capable of reasoning about social alliances can also hallucinate and then reify non-existent social categories. These models provide insight into the psychological origins of race and racism by demonstrating that a coalitional psychology alone is sufficient to create beliefs in phenotype-based social categories even when no such categories truly exist."

-Dr. Dan Conroy-Beam