The Frederick Douglass Institute
ONE BOOK WCU Selection:

Rebecca Skloot’s
The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks

The Frederick Douglass Institute (FDI) board (of which Chris Awuyah, Bill Lalicker, and Eleanor Shevlin are members) has chosen Rebecca Skloot’s The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks as the focus of a One Book program for WCU. CAPC has approved it as the WCU One Book for 2017-2018. We see The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks as a useful textbook in many courses.

For instance, the Department of English is assigning this book in appropriate WRT200-series courses, and it has been approved as such by Dr. Tim Dougherty, Director of First Year Writing. CAPC has endorsed the book as a powerful contribution to our students’ achievement of general education goals. This book could be a cross-course offering for many courses in many subjects. As you complete your book orders for Summer 2017, Fall 2017, or Spring 2018, please consider it for inclusion in any appropriate course.

The book is a reflective first-person research work in which Skloot traces the fate of the cancer cells taken and multiply reproduced, without authorization or compensation, from Henrietta Lacks in the 1950s, with the result that the African American woman’s cells are now the basis for much of the most important cancer research in the world. The book also engages with the family of Lacks and connects African American history and the legacy of racial injustice to the case of the cells. This interesting and important book of written research connects research, ethics, history, gender, and race in revealing ways. It’s also an engaging read, with a combination of personal voice and serious analysis, with something to offer students of many majors.

FDI is also going to arrange talks and events related to the book, and these could be excellent supplemental activities for your students.