

# The Blinding Light of Race in Science and Society

Tuesday March 12th 5:00pm  
Humanities 1B50, 1610 Pleasant St



**Dr. Michael Blakey**  
National Endowment for the  
Humanities Professor of  
Anthropology, Africana Studies,  
and American Studies  
Director of the Institute of  
Historical Biology  
College of William and Mary

Blakey's lecture surveys the epoch story of racism (the ideology and implementation of White supremacy) and analyses its patterns. The argument stretches from Aristotle's philosophy of 'nature,' to racism's origins in American slavery, its persistent opposition and backlash to it, concluding in the current era with performative anti-racism and the backlash of Trump and DeSantis. It emphasizes the role of Western science in the construction of White supremacy, the counter arguments of Black intellectuals, and efforts to silence them. A history of 'nature' and 'nurture' arguments in science shows continued ideological adherence to a biodeterministic imagination (with or without 'race') serving as moral justifications of White privilege over 'undeserving others.' Blakey criticizes performative solutions to racism ('diversity regimes' according to James Thomas) and proposes alternative, expensive educational and economic changes that might actually work to mitigate or end racial discrimination.

**Professor Michael Blakey** is a biological anthropologist working at the interface of biology and culture. This includes an examination of the social history of theories that connect biology, "nature," social inequality, and behavior; the articulation between human biology, racial ideology, and public policy; the political economy of health in industrial society; the bioarchaeology of the African Diaspora; and the ethics and epistemology of publicly engaged research. He was Scientific Director of the New York African Burial Ground Project (1992-2009), providing the foundation for ethical bioarchaeology, the term 'descendant community,' and its use in an empowered public engagement intended for the democratization of knowledge. Blakey has been appointed Co-Chair of the American Anthropological Association's Commission for the Ethical Treatment of Human Remains.