**The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks Multi-part Project**

**Overview**

1. **Read Book and complete essay questions**

* **Due Date:** October 27 @ midnight
* **Time Estimate** (to complete the essay questions): This is a big task and everyone reads at a different pace. I estimate that once your read the book, it should take approximately 2-3 hours to answer the questions. I would recommend reviewing these questions before and while you are reading the book. Be sure to take notes as appropriate for answering the questions thoroughly.
* **Basic Guidelines:** Please refer to the guide provided for writing quality essay responses, “Answering Essay Questions Made Easier.” You will need to provide references to justify your responses.
* **Time Estimate:**

1. **Taking the Least of You Article Blog & Response**

* **Due Date:** November 3 @ midnight
* **Time Estimate:** 2 hours

1. **Medical/Scientific Racism Project**

* **Due Date:** December 15 @ midnight
* **Time Estimate:** 8 hours

**Part I Book Reading and Essay Questions**

1. **Essay Discussion Questions for “The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks.”**

**Directions:** Please answer the following questions. For each response, your answer should be concise and follow the guidelines from the handouts provided on how to write essay question responses that are effective and persuasive. Your responses should also use citations from your textbook or other sources to help emphasize your points**. Please DO NOT use direct quotations for this assignment unless you need to use a quote from the Henrietta Lacks book to emphasize a point**. You may also need to use outside sources to justify your points.

**100 points – Due October 27 @ midnight (NOTE: 50 points is for reading the book and 50 points for the essay questions)**

1. What role did the deferential attitude towards doctors in the early 20th century play in the interaction between Henrietta, her family, Johns Hopkins? Identify at least one ethical issue that could be attributed to this deferential attitude. Is it still this way today? (10 points)
2. Henrietta Lacks died in 1951, but her cancer cells are still alive today. Do you think they carry some essence of Henrietta? How do you think you would perceive cells from someone close to you that grow in culture in a laboratory...or is the idea of cells simply too remote to relate to? It may help to put yourself in the shoes of one of her children. (10 points)
3. The passage in which the initial fated cells were removed from Henrietta Lacks’ body reads as follows (see page 33):*“With Henrietta unconscious on the operating table in the center of the room, her feet in stirrups, the surgeon on duty, Dr. Lawrence Wharton, Jr., sat on a stool between her legs. He peered inside Henrietta, dilated her cervix, and prepared to treat her tumor. But first – though no one had told Henrietta that TeLinde was collecting samples or asked if she wanted to be a donor – Wharton picked up a sharp knife and shaved two dime-sized pieces of tissue from Henrietta’s cervix: one from her tumor, and one from the healthy cervical tissue nearby. Then he placed the samples in a glass dish.”*

Bearing in mind that those two tissue samples removed from Henrietta were *not* removed in an attempt to treat her cancer, but rather purely for purposes of research, was it wrong for the doctor to remove the sample tissue in the first place? Was it wrong for Dr. Gey to collect those samples for the purpose of trying to grow them in controlled conditions? Does the end – i.e., the immeasurable benefit to humankind resulting from those tissue samples – justify the means – i.e., removing tissue from a person without their consent or knowledge? What does this book tell us about the history of science and how science has progressed since the 1950s? (10 points)

1. The RAND Corporation estimates that 304 million tissue samples, from 178 million are people, are currently held by labs. If you discovered that tissue routinely removed from your body at some point in the past went on to significantly benefit science and research, would you feel that you should somehow be compensated? What do you think is more important – a person’s personal rights over their own tissue, or contributing to science and research for the benefit of all humankind? (10 points)
2. What is your opinion on the needs of scientific research versus the ethical rights of individuals? Be sure to justify your answer with a valid reference – opinions should be supported by facts (5 points)
3. Compare and contrast the differences between moral rights and legal rights? (5 points)

**Sources:**

NOTE: These questions were adapted from the Beloit Chemistry Department’s publicly posted question list. I take no credit for writing these questions.

[Discussion Questions for The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks (beloit.edu)](https://chemistry.beloit.edu/classes/nanotech/henrietta_lacks/Discussion%20Questions%20for%20The%20Immortal%20Life%20of%20Henrietta%20Lacks.pdf)