

**College of the Holy Cross  
Holy Cross Online Learning**

**2018 Alumni & Friends Community Book Discussion**

**Faculty Participants:**

**Mary Doyle Roche '90, *Religious Studies***

**Ann Sheehy, *Biology***

**Michael West, *History***

**Facilitator:**

**Amit Taneja, *Dean for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion***

**Discussion & technical questions:**

**[hconline@holycross.edu](mailto:hconline@holycross.edu)**

**Discussion Description:**

Over the course of five weeks, Holy Cross faculty members will lead us in an online discussion of the critically-acclaimed [\*The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks\*](#). In this New York Times bestseller, author Rebecca Skloot tells the story of Henrietta Lacks, a poor tobacco farmer, whose cells were taken without her knowledge in 1951. Known by scientists as “HeLa” cells, they became one of the most important tools in medicine, vital for developing the polio vaccine, cloning, gene mapping, and more. Henrietta’s cells have been bought and sold by the billions, yet she remains virtually unknown. What are the historic, ethical and scientific implications of this story and its overarching meaning for us today?

**Course Materials:**

Participants are asked to read *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*. The book can be purchased at all major booksellers and can be borrowed from many public libraries. The online discussion is provided at no cost through our web-based platform. Suggested supplemental resources will be offered each week for those desiring to learn more about that week's topic.

### **Discussion Activities:**

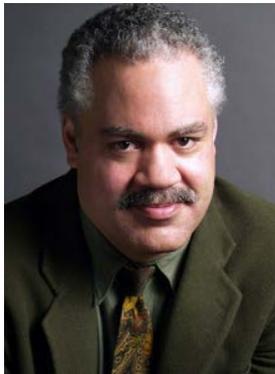
Each week includes a discussion video (approximately 20-30 minutes) with different Holy Cross faculty members. Participants will then have the opportunity to reflect on the topics discussed in each week's video, and to pose questions to the faculty member leading that week's discussion via an interactive class discussion board. Our faculty will monitor all online discussion board questions/comments throughout the five week program.

We anticipate participants spending no more than one to two hours per week on discussion activities.

### **Discussion Mastery:**

There are no graded activities in this online discussion. To get the most out of the experience, full participation in all activities is recommended. Please comment on classmates' posts as we create an electronic environment that replicates the intellectually stimulating atmosphere present in Holy Cross classrooms.

### **Discussion Schedule:**



#### **Week #1 (March 12-18)**

Michael R. West  
*Associate Professor, History*  
*Director, Africana Studies*

In a pre-recorded video, Prof. West will provide the historical context that informs the events of the book.



#### **Week #2 (March 19-25):**

Mary Doyle Roche '90  
*Associate Professor, Religious Studies*

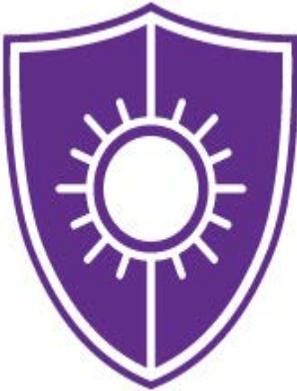
In a pre-recorded video, Prof. Roche will discuss ethical issues raised by the book.



**Week #3 (March 26-April 1):**

Ann Sheehy  
*Associate Professor, Biology*

In a pre-recorded video, Prof. Sheehy will discuss the science and scientific impact of HeLa cells.



**Weeks #4 - #5 (April 2-15):**

Video panel discussion and conversation with all three faculty, moderated by Amit Taneja, answering your questions/comments from prior weeks. The final video for this section will post on Monday, April 9.