**International Society for the History, Philosophy, and Social Studies of Biology (ISHPSSB)**

**Annual Meeting: July 7-12, 2013 Interdisciplinary Session:  “Is Race Real?”**

*Organizer:* John Philip Jackson (Colorado)

*Discussants:* Quayshawn Spencer (Philosophy, San Francisco) and Melinda Gormley (Historian, Notre Dame Reilly Center for Science, Technology and Values)

*Participants:* Suman Seth (Cornell), John Philip Jackson (Colorado), Ann Morning (NYU), Matthew Carl Kopec (Colorado)

***Abstract Submission***

**CONCEPTS OF RACE AMONG U.S. BIOLOGISTS AND ANTHROPOLOGISTS**

**Ann Morning, NYU Sociology**

Sociological literature often claims that academics across the disciplinary spectrum have converged on a common understanding of race as socially constructed rather than biologically anchored. Yet this claim has received little empirical scrutiny. In this presentation, I report the results of over 40 interviews with academic biologists and anthropologists at four universities in the northeastern United States. Contrary to sociologists’ expectations, racial constructivism is revealed to be a minority viewpoint. Moreover, this research shows that the usual “constructivist” versus “essentialist” dichotomy is a blunt tool with which to characterize scientists’ concepts of race; a third perspective—“anti-essentialism”—must be taken into account. Recognizing anti-essentialist discourse calls for a reevaluation of prior research that emphasizes sociodemographic status and professional affiliation as key influences on interviewees’ concepts of race; this project demonstrates that such factors do little to distinguish essentialist from anti-essentialist thinkers. Instead, I argue that scientists’ boundary-marking attempts—especially their efforts to champion their concepts of race by emphasizing these ideas’ scientific and moral worth—offer a more promising clue for understanding why some “experts” maintain that race is biologically real, and others disagree.