Course Assignment/Activity Ideas for *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*
Submitted by instructors at the College of Southern Nevada who are involved in the 2017-2018 One Book/One College program (https://at.csn.edu/one-book-one-college)

**BUSINESS**

**Business Ethics**
First, analyze one of the central ethical questions and dilemmas raised by the text, specifically one related to its business/financial aspects. Second, explain what the financial and business sectors in the U.S. can and should do to guard the legal rights of their consumers.

**Business Law**
Compare and contrast current laws concerning the protection of intellectual property and tissue samples: What are the major similarities and differences in these various laws (including the philosophies behind them)? Do you believe current tissue sample laws sufficiently protect individuals, or do they go too far and unnecessarily hinder business and scientific endeavors?

**Mock Marketing Campaign:**
The book, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, could be used as the focus of a mock marketing campaign. To learn more about effective marketing techniques, students might be required to develop a detailed plan to drive consumer awareness of and interest in the book. An instructor could limit students to a set budget, focus on specific advertising mediums, and assess student learning in the project through an essay or properly formatted business proposal.

**FINE ARTS**

**Art**
1. Hela Art Cells
   a. Analyze the collection of Hela artwork made from, and inspired by, Henrietta's Lacks cells: [Online collection of works](#)
2. Individual Art Project
   a. Try to reconstruct works like the artwork featured in the Hela Cells collection
   b. Convey the themes of the book in a project (book cover, capture a scene through a painting or collage, etc.)

**Communication**
1. Cross-Cultural Communication
   a. Discuss the ways in which communication breaks down across cultural and racial lines. Identify other instances where that has historically occurred?
   b. Identify the ways in which Rebecca Skloot was able to break through those communication walls.
2. Goal Achievement and Communication  
   a. Unpack the methods Skloot uses to reach her goals through effective communication patterns. Basically, treat the book like a case study, exploring the benefits of communication.

Theatre  
1. Character Analysis Activities  
   a. Unpack her ability to “capture the language” of her characters. Ask the students to deconstruct the ways in which she conveys authentic humanity, instead of merely conveying the story in scientific terms.  
   b. Analyze characters from the book in terms of their behaviors, speech patterns, manner of dress, etc. What do these details convey about the character?  
   c. Ask students to reflect upon how they would capture the humanity of a character through writing/acting? As an actor or writer, how would you go that extra length to capture the authentic essence of that character? To what smaller details would you pay attention?  
2. Scene Setting  
   a. Students could translate a scene from the book into a live scene. How can this scene be represented with lighting, dress, scenery, etc.? What details need to be included?  
3. Thematic Comparison  
   a. Compare the themes of the book to plays that deal with race relations, such as *A Raisin in the Sun*. How are they similar/different?  
   b. Challenge the students to find other pieces that handle the same issues.  
4. Analyze the HBO Film Adaptation  
   a. Diagram what was retained and removed from the story. Are these elements important? How do they affect the story?  
   b. How does the movie capture the essence of the book? How closely does the film convey the themes from the book?  
   c. Unpack the choices made by the actors.