**Assignment 4**

Length: 6-7 pages

Margins and spacing: 1-inch margins, double-spaced

Font and typesize: Calibri (12-point) or TimesNewRoman (12-point)

Style Guide: Modern Languages Association (MLA)

In *Biased*, Jennifer L. Eberhardt explains that she became interested in her research in order to answer a basic question: “*How does race shape who we are and how we experience the world?*” (15), a question she says “is the starting point of bigger questions about identity, power, and privilege that have molded our country and roiled the world for centuries” (15). As she explains, some primary human characteristics—like the need for affiliation (18) or the desire to categorize experiences and therefore to bring “coherence to a chaotic world” (24)—shape the way our brains develop and the way we process the world around us. Eberhardt’s research has shown that “the brain tunes itself to our experiences as we move through life”; and because racial categories are historically so significant in the United States, “race can serve as a powerful interpretive lens in that tuning process” (19). The effects of these biases and stereotypes that are generated by “cultural, political, and economic forces” is ultimately, Eberhardt suggests, “to protect the status quo” (35).

Eberhardt often turns to her own experiences to provide examples of how bias means that we, in a phrase she quotes from Walter Lippman, “define first and then see” (33). Pick one of her major examples—her experience switching schools (11-13), her son Ebbie's question about different treatment of black people (36-38), her son Everett’s identification of a man that “looks like Daddy” on a plane (3-4), or the story told to her by a policeman about responding to his own reflection (4-5)—and write an essay in which you explore how the processes that Eberhardt describes are working in that example (alternatively, you can focus on an example from your own experience if you think it works well to exemplify Eberhardt’s ideas). How would you explain Eberhardt’s example and its significance to someone who hasn’t read her work? What does Eberhardt’s example show about how our brains process information about the world around us in ways that lead to implicit bias? What are the mechanisms at work in that example? How can you connect that example to other ideas in Eberhardt’s chapters? How might the biases operating in that example work “to protect the status quo”? Finally, what larger conclusions can you draw about vision and power after reading Eberhardt’s work?