

Paperback Re-issue

Skin colour is perhaps the most decisive and abused physical characteristic of humankind. This book presents a multidisciplinary overview of how and why human populations vary so markedly in their skin colour. The biological aspects of the pigment cell and its production of melanin are reviewed. The functions of melanin in the skin, brain, eye and ear are considered, and the common clinical abnormalities of pigmentation, such as albinism, are described and illustrated. Detailed reflectance data from worldwide surveys of skin colour are also presented. The historical and contemporary background of the phenomenon is explored in relation to the so-called 'colour problem' in society. Finally, the possible evolutionary forces which shape human pigmentation are assessed.

This fascinating account will be of interest to graduate students and researchers of biological anthropology, anatomy, physiology and dermatology, as well as medical practitioners.