SOCIOLOGY OF THE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY
Sociology 378

Spring 2013
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Office hours:
Mon. & Wed. 3:30-4:30 PM
Tue. & Th. 9:30-11:30 AM
or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The preeminent African American intellectual of the twentieth century, W. E. B. Du Bois, insisted on the importance and necessity of careful sociological investigation into the circumstances and dynamics of black social life. For Du Bois, this commitment reflected several ambitions: the systematic development of sociology as a field of scientific inquiry; the general advance of human knowledge and understanding particularly with regard to the black experience; and to provide the factual and informational base necessary to contribute to improvement in the status and well-being of African Americans.

Du Bois outlined an ambitious agenda and ultimately made many significant sociological contributions. However, neither Du Bois himself, nor the discipline of sociology, have ever fully delivered on the vision sketched by Du Bois. That said, sociology and sociologists have long studied many aspects of the African American experience. We will follow in that tradition, coupling Du Bois’s early efforts and statements with significant contemporary research on the black experience.

This course examines a range of issues defining major dimensions of the African American experience. These include: race, matters of class, economic status, and poverty, group culture, the family, schooling and education, gender and identity in the African American community. Our objective is to arrive at a deeper sociological analysis and appreciation of the changing life experiences of African Americans.

COURSE STRUCTURE

This course will be organized around lectures, discussions and other class activities. Generally, lectures will be given introducing or extending information on the topic of concern. Discussions will be based on assigned readings, and films/videos.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND READINGS:

CLASS PARTICIPATION: Class attendance and participation in class discussions is expected on a regular basis. Because discussion is an integral part of the course, your presence during discussions is imperative. Attendance will be taken and participation in discussion groups will be monitored. Class participation is worth 15% of your final grade.
READINGS: There will be assigned readings from the books listed below and from readings on BlackBoard. Readings for a specific section/week are listed in the topic section of this syllabus (pp. 5-9). Each member of the class is expected to read the material and be prepared to discuss it in class unless otherwise noted. Modifications may occur during the semester as new material is added or if a previous reading needs to be removed.

List of required books to be purchased are below:

- Margaret Hunter, *Race, Gender and the Politics of Skin Tone*, New York: Routledge, 2005.

** Most of these texts are on reserve in Mudd Library

Recommended but not required:


PROJECT/PAPER: The goal of this project is to focus on a topic of interest to you as it relates to the African American community. The range of topics are enormous, however, it is expected that you will narrow your focus on an issue of sociological significance in the African American community. To assist you in this process, you are to submit a proposal prior to starting research (one or two paragraphs outlining the project). The final paper should include a description of the issue/question to be addressed, an informed literature review on the subject and suggestive policy or program to address the problem or issue. The completed version must not exceed 25 but with minimal of 15 pages. See attached description for more details (see pages 9-10). You are to consult at least ten sources outside of the assigned readings. Resources need to be referenced at the end of the paper. Please follow the approved APA format.
for references/bibliography (see examples on pages 11-13). This paper is worth 40% of your final grade.

**PRESENTATION:** During the last two weeks of the semester you will be expected to give a brief presentation on your research project. During the presentation you will give a summary of your project and respond to any questions to follow. More details on the character of the presentations will be forthcoming. You will be evaluated by your peers on this presentation. It is worth 15% of your final grade.

**SHORT ESSAYS.** You will be expected to complete six out of a possible ten response papers (approximately 2-4 pages in length, double spaced) during the course of the semester. A question or series of questions will be provided and you are asked to respond to them incorporating the readings from the required texts and other assigned readings. This will be worth 30% of your final grade.

**GRADING:** Final grades will be assessed as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Individual Research Project</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essays (5 @ 6%)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation/Discussion</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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**HONOR CODE:** On papers / exercises, you are expected to follow the guidelines as established by the Oberlin College Honor System.

(http://www.oberlin.edu/students/student_pages/honor_code.html)

As such, you are required to follow the letter of that code and write and sign at the end of each academic exercise submitted for credit the following: “I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this exam/assignment”. The default of this statement is that you are required to do your own work without the help from others not explicitly authorized by me (You may, however, use campus resources, such as the library, composition instructors, or writing tutors)

**CLASS POLICIES:**

- **Comment on course content:** We will not be able to cover every issue or topic as it relates to the field or communities involved. This is impossible given the enormity of such material and theory. However, this course does try provide some insight into the accuracies of the phenomenon. Although the main theoretical thrust has sociological underpinnings, this in no way reflects an understanding of the interdisciplinary nature of race and the African American community. There are new and emerging facets to this topic as presented in Ethnic Studies, Comparative American Studies, African American studies and so on, that are so intertwined with these areas of study that it makes it almost impossible not to recognize the contributions these fields make to our
discussion. That is why I say that what you discover here is not the end all to this topic.

- **Ground rules: Be respectful.** Let it be known that not everyone is going to agree with every authors comments or your comments, perspectives nor my comments for that matter. It may at times become tense in class over certain topics that may appear to be of a personal nature, but in reality have larger social implications. And I encourage you to openly express your thoughts, ideas, and experiences in written assignments or discussions However, be respectful of the rights of others to their thoughts and opinions. Be cognisant that we are engaging in intellectual learning and by no means assume that everything will be resolved in our discussion.

- **Open door policy:** I encourage all of you to see me outside of class, during office hours or by appointment, especially as it relates to assignments and any questions or comments you may have about course content or related issues. Do not hesitate to ask for help!

- **Special Needs or Disabilities:** If you require special accommodations in this class, please see me at your earliest convenience so that we can address these needs in a timely manner. If you do have special needs, you will need to present a letter from the office of Services for Students with Disabilities (Peters Hall G27) documenting the accommodations needed. Please contact Ms. Jane Boomer at x5588 or visit [http://oncampus.oberlin.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp?tab_tab_group_id=null&url=/webapps/blackboard/execute/courseMain?course_id=_24550_1&](http://oncampus.oberlin.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp?tab_tab_group_id=null&url=/webapps/blackboard/execute/courseMain?course_id=_24550_1&).

- **Other concerns:**
  1. TURN OFF YOUR CELL PHONES OR SILENCE THEM DURING CLASS PLEASE!
  2. PLEASE DO NOT EAT IN CLASS. It is very distracting.(besides some of us may be hungry as well!). Drinking a beverage is fine.
  3. Do not talk or whisper conversations with your neighbors during class. This is distracting to the rest of the class and to me!
  4. AVOID BEING LATE TO CLASS. This is also disturbing to the class and me.
  5. Do not use laptops during class unless instructed to do so.
CLASS MEETINGS AND TOPICS EXAMINED

(BB) = Reading is on Black Board

FEBRUARY 4, 6, 8 INTRODUCTION: DU BOIS, SOCIOLOGY, & THE EARLY STUDY OF THE AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE:

“Problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the colorline”

READINGS:

Suggested:

FEBRUARY 11, 13, 15 THE MODERN SIGNIFICANCE OF RACE

READINGS:


ESSAY 1 DUE FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 18
FEBRUARY 18, 20, 22  DIMENSION OF INEQUALITY: POVERTY AND NEGOTIATING POVERTY

READINGS:


FEBRUARY 25, 27, MARCH 1  POVERTY AND CULTURE VERSUS CULTURE OF POVERTY

READINGS:

1. Wilson, More Than Just Race (entire).

2. Sandra Susan Smith, Lone Pursuit: Distrust and Defensive Individualism Among the Black Poor (TBA)

ESSAY 2 DUE MONDAY, MARCH 1

MARCH 4, 6, 8  THE AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILY:

READINGS:


MARCH 11, 13, 15  THE AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILY CONTINUED

READINGS:


ESSAY 3 DUE FRIDAY, MARCH 15
MARCH 18, 20, 22 (NO CLASS) THE BLACK MIDDLE CLASS: SAVIOR OR THE PROBLEM?

READINGS:
1. Du Bois, “The Talented Tenth” (1903) (BB)
2. E. Franklin Frazier, Black Bourgeoisie (chapters 1,2,5,6, 9, 10) (BB)

PROPOSAL FOR RESEARCH PROJECT DUE FRIDAY, MARCH 22

MARCH 23-31 SPRING BREAK

APRIL 1, 3, 5 THE BLACK MIDDLE CLASS CONTINUED

READINGS
1. Lacy, Karyn, Blue-Chip Black (entire).

APRIL 8, 10, 12 DIMENSIONS OF INEQUALITY: WEALTH

READINGS:

ESSAY 4 DUE FRIDAY APRIL 12

APRIL 15, 17, 19 DIMENSIONS OF INEQUALITY: SCHOOLS, EDUCATION AND CULTURE

READINGS:
2. Karolyn Tyson, Integration Interrupted (entire)
APRIL 22, 24, 26    DIMENSIONS OF INEQUALITY: HEALTH

READINGS:

1. VIDEO: UNEQUAL HEALTH


ESSAY 5 DUE FRIDAY APRIL 26

APRIL 29, MAY 1, 3    GENDER DYNAMICS/RACISM, SEXISM, AND POLITICS

READINGS:

1. Hunter, Race, Gender, and the Politics of Skin Tone (entire).

2. Collins, Black Sexual Politics tba

MAY 6, 8, 10 S/ RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS/ RAP UP

MAY 11-13 READING PERIOD

MAY 14-19 EXAM PERIOD

FINAL PAPER DUE FRIDAY MAY 18TH
RESEARCH PROJECT/PAPER

The goal of the project is for you to explore an issue of the African American community that is of great interest to you, whether it is related to any of the issues we have discussed in class or to some others have not been mentioned thus far. The range of topics can focus on the African American community at any level, from racial attitudes to institutional discrimination, from immigration/migration to specific within group experiences and issues.

Once you have chosen a general topic or issue, the next step is to decide how you would like to learn more about this: i.e., library research, observation, etc. This can include observing race in a local community setting (e.g., volunteering in a community agency, surveying individuals, observing racial interaction in for example, schools, public settings) seeking out individuals who are involved in the issue you are investigating and interviewing them or merely focusing an indepth exploration through library research.

Before you begin, however, you should have a sense of what it is you are interested in seeing. While at first, you may have a vague notion of questions for which you would like to find answers for, as you get more involved in the project, you may have to and should narrow the focus of your search. This is crucial. The most advanced research projects are usually limited to answering one or two questions. If you can whittle the focus of the project down to a single question, then you are on the right track.

The following is a brief description of how you might approach each of the sections of the project. Please remember that this is only meant to serve as a general guide to help you if you have not done something like this before. An alternative strategy is fine, provided that you let me know in advance or outline this method in your project proposal. For a more general and useful guide on conducting social research I would recommend that you review a copy of The Craft Of Research(2nd) by Wayne Booth et al. (2003).

THE RESEARCH PROJECT PROPOSAL

This is simply a summary of what it is you plan to study and how you plan to study it. It should be no more than two pages in length. Introduce the topic that you will be investigating and describe how you expect to approach this inquiry. In this proposal, you should identify a single question that highlights the focus of your investigation. Also specify the general areas of literature you intend to look into as a way to further develop your knowledge of this subject. The proposal might also include a statement as to why this subject is important and worth investigating. This proposal will be due on FRIDAY, MARCH 22nd.

THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Part I - Introduction

Here, you simply introduce the topic and explain what it is that you were looking for in your experience. What is the main question you were hoping to answer? What are some of the common conceptions or misconceptions surrounding this issue? Your task here is to basically bring the reader up to speed on the subject, providing any background information you feel is essential to a solid understanding of the topic.
Part II - Literature Review

While your conclusions maybe be based on your own observations, you will initially want to find out what else has been written on this particular question in order to challenge these ideas or build on them. This means going to the library and finding recent articles or books on the issue you will be considering. You are not expected to engage in a comprehensive search of everything that has been written on the subject, but you should try to find about four or five current articles that are directly relevant to the issue you have chosen. Ideally, you will want to find authors whose work represents some of the main ideas that are circulating on this subject today. The idea is to get a sense of what the existing positions and debates are on this issue, and to see what may be lacking in contemporary discussions of this topic.

Once you have read these articles, review and develop your own critique of them. Your task here is to first to briefly state the main argument of each author, ultimately describing to the reader the basic positions that are out there on this topic. This does not mean that you are expected to restate every detail in each article. Your task in this regard is instead to simply extract from these writings the primary line of reasoning underlying the work of each individual you have studied. You may find that a few of the articles espouse a similar viewpoint, and you can group them accordingly, or you may find that each has a slightly different take on the issue, and you can convey that in your review as well.

Secondly, included in this portion of the project should be your reaction to these articles. Do they capture the aspects of your issue in an insightful way, or are they lacking in some respects? What do you feel can be added to the research that has been done thus far on this topic?

Part III - Observations

After you have spent some time gathering information and observations on this subject, your task is then to write these down in a way that hopefully sheds some light on the question you were asking. You may want to begin this section of the project by stating what your initial ideas were and by explaining why you chose to approach the inquiry the way you did. Then simply convey to the reader what it was that you saw or what your responses were if based on interviews. You are not expected in this section to draw any conclusions on this issue, but only to describe the aspects of your experience that were relevant to your topic.

Part IV - Analysis and Conclusion

In this section, you can finally explain what you have found in a way that goes beyond merely describing your observations. Here, you want to develop some sort of an assessment of what these observations mean. What insights did you gain from this experience? Did you find that your initial assumptions were validated, or did you encounter some unexpected findings? What conclusions can you draw from this?
Quick Style Guide for Students Writing Sociology Papers. The following is taken from American Sociological Association Style Guide (2nd ed.), 1997. This is intended as a quick reference for students preparing papers.

**References in the main text:**
Include the last name of the author and the year of publication. In order to avoid plagiarism (inappropriately using another person's words without proper citation), you must directly quote verbatim, using quotation marks and the name, date, and page number in parentheses or you must paraphrase and mention the source of the idea (name and date only).

**Use page numbers only when you quote an author's words:**
- Sociological analysis of cities is “critical to achieving far-reaching social change in this century,” according to Duncan (1959, p. 71)

Otherwise, if the author's name is in the text, follow the name with the year in parentheses. If the author's name is not in the text, enclose both the last name and year in parentheses:
- According to Duncan (1959), sociological analysis of cities is critical to creating positive social change in America.
- Sociological analysis of cities is critical to creating social change (Duncan 1959)

**For joint authors,** use both last names: (Martin and Bailey 1988)

**For institutional authorship,** use minimum identification in the text and complete citation under references: (U.S. Bureau of Census 1963, p. 117)

Separate **a series of references** with a semicolon: (Burgess 1968; Maxwell 1971)

If there is no date for a publication use n.d. in place of the year.

**For unpublished materials,** use “forthcoming” to indicate material scheduled for publication. For dissertations and unpublished papers, cite the date: (Smith, forthcoming).

**For works with three authors,** list all last names in the first citation in the text; thereafter use “et al.” For more than three authors, use “et al” throughout: (Carr, Smith, and Jones 1962), then (Carr et al. 1962)

**Block quotations** are presented in smaller type and are set off in a separate, indented paragraph. They are not enclosed in quotation marks:
- As stated by Wright and Jacobs (1994):
  The variation in men's earnings relative to their peers in the labor force was not a reliable predictor of men's attrition. This finding is inconsistent with the prediction that declines in earnings are responsible for male flight from feminizing occupations. (P. 531).

**Footnotes & Endnotes:**
Endnotes are used to explain or amplify text, cite materials of limited availability, or
append information presented in a table or figure. Number endnotes and list at the end of your paper. Increasingly people use endnotes rather than footnotes and use either one sparingly as they tend to disrupt the flow of the text. Use footnotes and endnotes only when necessary. Footnotes appear at the bottom of the page in which they originate.

**Miscellaneous Style & Grammar Matters:**

- Foreign words in your text should be italicized or underlined. Commonly used foreign words or terms, however, should appear in regular type. Examples are per se, ad hoc, et al.
- When using an acronym, spell out the complete term the first time you use it and present the acronym in parentheses:
  
  
  Later: “CPS data show that . . .”
- Equations in the text should be typed or printed. Use consecutive Arabic numerals in parentheses at the right margin to identify important equations. Align all expressions and clearly mark compound subscripts and superscripts.
- Do not use abbreviations such as etc., e.g., or i.e. in your text. You may use these abbreviations in parenthetical information, however:
  
  For example, some terms used in specific areas of sociology are not readily understood by the general sociologist (e.g. cultural capital, etc.).

**Cited References (reference list):**

A bibliography includes all the works you read or scanned during the writing process. List references in alphabetical order by authors' last names. References without an author name appear at the beginning of the list. For two or more references by the same author, list them in order of the year of publication. Use six hyphens and a period (------) in place of the name when the authorship is the same as in the preceding citation. To list two or more works by the same author from the same year, distinguish them by adding letters (a, b, c, etc.) to the year and list in alphabetical order by the title.

**Sample formats:**

**Books**


**Journal Articles:**


------. 1947b. “Systems in Qualitative Variables when some of the Variables are

In most cases, journal pages are numbered consecutively within a volume year. Therefore you can often omit the issue number. Only include the issue number or month only when it is need to distinguish one issue from another within a volume year.

**Articles from Collected Works/Chapters in Books:**


**Unpublished Manuscripts:**


**Mechanics:**

- Page Numbering: Although you count pages from the first page of the text, page numbering starts to appear on the second page (as page 2). Carry the numbers system through endnotes and references.
- Tables: Number consecutively throughout the text. Place tables at the end of the paper, but refer to them in the text by number. Each table includes a descriptive title and headings for both columns and rows.
- Figures and other Artwork: Number consecutively throughout the text. Place figures at the end of the paper, but refer to them in the text by number. Each figure must have a descriptive title and appropriate headings.

For more information . . . check out these additional references