

**INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY:  
FROM DU BOIS TO TODAY (ABBREVIATED SYLLABUS)**

**6.30-8.00p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays, 245 Li Ka Shing**

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois has rightly been claimed as the hitherto unrecognized founder of American sociology. He lived a long life, born in 1868 in Great Barrington, Massachusetts and died at the age of 95 in Ghana in 1963. Although one of the great intellectual figures of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, until recently sociologists largely neglected Du Bois' work and life. He was educated at Fisk University, the University of Berlin, after which he became the first African American PhD to graduate from Harvard, writing his dissertation on the suppression of the slave trade in the United States. He had two stints teaching as a sociologist at the Historically Black University, Atlanta University. The first stint was from 1897 and 1910 when he developed the Atlanta School of community studies and the second was from 1933 and 1944 when he developed his global sociology.

For much of his life Du Bois was a scholar activist or a public sociologist. He was a founder of the civil rights organization, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1910; he was a Pan-Africanist beginning as early as 1900; he was a fighter for racial equality, which included opposing Booker T. Washington in the first decade-and-a half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; he was a peace activist after World War Two, and a socialist for most of his adult life. He was the founding editor of the influential NAACP magazine, *The Crisis*, from 1910 to 1934. He was the author of some 20 books, many of which have now become classics in sociology, history, and other disciplines. He wrote several novels, he was a poet, and a dramatist. These are just a few highlights of his extraordinary life that we will explore this semester.

So much for Du Bois, but what about sociology? One of the great sociologists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the maverick, C Wright Mills, author of many famous books, including the *Sociological Imagination* where he defined sociology as lying at the intersection of biography and history. Put simply sociology is understanding the lives of people in their historical context. Sociology tries to understand how we are shaped by historical forces beyond our control and how under certain circumstances we also shape those external forces through our individual and collective action.

Du Bois had a parallel definition of sociology. In an unpublished essay of science fiction, *The Princess Steel*, written between 1908 and 1910, Du Bois focuses on the magic of an African American sociologist who says: "You know we can see the great that is far by means of the telescope and the small that is near by means of the microscope. We can see the Far Great and the Near Small but not the Great Near." The Great Near is the realm of sociology where large scale forces, or the "social Over-life," make themselves present in our daily existence. Sociology requires neither a telescope nor a microscope, says Du Bois, but the fantastical machinery of the megascope to reveal how historical forces shape everyday life, which is none other than Mills' sociological imagination. Not only in his conception of sociology but also in his practice, Du Bois was the quintessential

sociologist. So much of his writing begins with lived experience, often his own, that he then locates within the broad historical context that shapes it.

The course will, therefore, follow the life of Du Bois – a drama in four episodes. We will begin with his early writings – the famous *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899) focused on the urban North, and *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), focused largely on the rural South. The second episode will pivot around Du Bois’ analysis of race, class and capitalism in his essays in *Darkwater* (1920) which opens up to a broader vision of the US, situated in world history, especially the history of imperialism. The third episode will focus on his masterpiece, *Black Reconstruction in America* (1935), written during the Great Depression, a radical inversion of conventional understandings of the origins and conduct of the Civil War, the period of Reconstruction and then the turn to Jim Crow. The final episode follows Du Bois engagement with Pan Africanism and his views of imperialism in *The World and Africa* (1947), and the international peace movement against nuclear war, making him an enemy of the US state as described *In Battle for Peace* (1952). Du Bois died in 1963, just as the US enters a “Second Reconstruction,” spawned by the Civil Rights Movement.

We will learn to be historians from Du Bois’ widening engagement with the world, and we will learn to be sociologists by examining the significance of his writings for the world in which we live today. In this way we will engage issues at the center of sociology through Du Bois’ megascope.

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You should buy a Reader from Replica Digital Ink at 2138 Oxford St. for \$36.28 so that you can scrutinize, read and reread, underline in multiple colors and make notes in the margins. You can obtain a Reader at this link: <https://readers.replicadigitalink.com/product/Soc1-F2022> It contains all the readings for the entire semester. If you want to buy books, then I recommend the following by Du Bois: *The Souls of Black Folk*, *Darkwater*, *Black Reconstruction in America*, *In Battle for Peace*. They are all quite cheap but they do come in different editions.

There will be four short (1,000 words), “take-home” papers spread over the semester. You’ll be required to write three of them – each based on questions distributed one week before the due date. Each essay will count for 25% of the final grade and the section grade will also count for 25%. If you write all four essays, then you will get the highest three grades.

Your Graduate Student Instructors are: Elena Amaya, José Avelanes, Akilah Favors, Janna Huang, Jessica Law, Anthony Palafox, Lara Schiffrin-Sands. It is essential that you attend sections if you wish to pass the class.

I will have Open Office Hours on Thursdays 4-6p.m. in my office, 454 Social Sciences Building.

## SCHEDULE

### Introduction

August 25: What is Sociology?

EPISODE I (1885-1910): BEHIND THE VEIL IN RURAL AND URBAN LIFE

- August 30: WEB Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899)
- Chapter I: The Scope of this Study (pp.1-4)
  - Chapter II: The Problem (pp.5-9)
  - Chapter XIV: The Causes of Crime and Poverty (pp.282-6)
  - Chapter XV: Social Classes and Amusements (pp.309-321)
  - Chapter XVI: Color Prejudice (pp.322-26)
  - Chapter XVIII: A Final Word (pp.385-97)
- September 1: William Julius Wilson, “Studying Inner-City Social Dislocations: The Challenge of Public Agenda Research.” 1990 Presidential Address to the American Sociological Association, *American Sociological Review* 56(1): 1-14 (1991)
- September 6: WEB Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903)
- The Forethought (pp.1-2)
  - Of Our Spiritual Striving (pp.3-12)
- September 8: Benjamin Snyder, “‘Big Brother’s Bigger Brother’: The Visual Politics of (Counter) Surveillance in Baltimore.” *Sociological Forum*, 35(4): 1315-1336 (2020).
- September 13: WEB Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903)
- On the Meaning of Progress (pp.51-62)
  - Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others (pp.36-50)
- September 15: Jonathan Kozol, “Life on the Mississippi,” *Savage Inequalities* (1991), pp.7-39
- September 20: WEB Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*.
- Of the Quest of the Golden Fleece (pp.111-132)
- September 22: Holly Haworth, “Something Inside of Us” *Oxford American* 82 (Fall 2013): 1-15.

### **SEPTEMBER 26: FIRST TAKE-HOME ESSAY DUE**

#### **EPISODE II (1910-1934): THE DYNAMICS OF RACE AND CLASS**

- September 27: WEB Du Bois, *Darkwater*: “The Souls of White Folk” (pp.17-29)
- September 29: Excerpts from Rebecca Donner, *All the Frequent Troubles of Our Days* (2021) (pp.15-24, 58-62, 70-85, 90-96, 97-100, 155-60, 206-9, 224-8, 287-291, 436-8, 442-44)
- October 4: WEB Du Bois, *Darkwater*, “Of Work and Wealth” (pp.47-62)
- October 6: Wes Enzina, “What will Chris Smalls do Next?” (*New York Magazine*, July 18, 2022)  
Angelika Maldonado, “Here’s How We Beat Amazon” (*Jacobin*, April 2, 2022)
- October 11: Du Bois, *Darkwater*, “The Damnation of Women” (pp.95-108)
- October 13: Angela Davis, “Reflections on the Black Woman’s Role in the Community of Slaves.” *The Black Scholar* 3(4). (1971)  
Patricia Hill Collins, “Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought.” *Social Problems* 33(6) (1986): S14-S32.

### **OCTOBER 17: SECOND TAKE-HOME ESSAY DUE**

#### **EPISODE III (1934-1944): RISE AND FALL OF BLACK RECONSTRUCTION**

- October 18: Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, “The Propaganda of History,” pp.711-29

- October 20: Marx, "Inaugural Address of the Working Men's International Association," October 1864  
 Marx, "The Civil War in the United States," *Die Presse*, November 7, 1861  
 Marx, "Address of the Working Men's Association to Abraham Lincoln" January 28, 1865  
 Marx, "International Working Men's Association, To the People of the United States of America,"
- October 25: Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*
- Chapter 1, "The Black Worker" (pp.3-16)
  - Chapter 2, "The White Worker" (pp.17-31) [SELECTIONS]
- October 27: Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*
- Chapter 3, "The Planter" (pp.32-54) [SELECTIONS]
  - Chapter 4, "The General Strike" (pp.55-83) [SELECTIONS]
- November 1: Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*
- Chapter 16, "Back Toward Slavery" (pp.670-711) [SELECTIONS]
- November 3: Nikole Hannah-Jones, "Our Democracy's Founding Ideals were false when they were written. Black Americans have fought to make them True." *New York Times*, August 14, 2019.

### **NOVEMBER 7: THIRD TAKE-HOME ESSAY DUE**

#### **EPISODE IV (1944-1963): SOCIALISM AND PAN-AFRICANISM**

- November 8: Du Bois, *The World and Africa* (1947)
- Chapter 3, "The Rape of Africa" pp.28-51
  - Chapter 11, "Andromeda," pp.143-64.
- November 10: Colin Kinniburgh, "[Beyond 'Conflict Minerals': The Congo's Resource Curse Lives On](#)" *Dissent*, Spring 2014.
- November 15: Du Bois, *In Battle for Peace* (1952)
- Chapter 9, "An Indicted Criminal," pp.69-86
  - Chapter 10, "The Pilgrimages for Defense," pp.87-108
  - Chapter 12, "The Trial," pp.119-139
- November 17: FILM: THE TRIAL OF THE CHICAGO 7
- November 22: Du Bois, *In Battle for Peace* (1952)
- Chapter 13, "The Acquittal," pp.150-55
  - Chapter 14, "Interpretations," pp.160-181
- November 24: THANKS GIVING HOLIDAY
- November 29: Erik Wright, "Real Utopias for a Global Sociology." (*Global Dialogue*, 1(5), July, 2011)  
 Martin Luther King, "I've been to the Mountain Top." (1968)
- December 1: Conclusion: Sociology After Du Bois?

### **DECEMBER 12 : FOURTH TAKE-HOME ESSAY DUE**