

SOC 190: THE BLACK MIDDLE-CLASS

Fall 2015

321 Haviland, Thursdays 2-4p

INSTRUCTOR: JOY L. HIGHTOWER

jhightow@berkeley.edu

Office Hours: Thursdays 11-1p

Office Hours Location: D-Lab, 356 Barrows

Online office hours sign-up: <http://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/itkiq>

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Why study the Black middle class? And, more specifically, how has the Black middle class achieved and maintained its class position? How has the Black middle class changed over time and across geographic space? What are its future prospects? These questions guide the course.

The rise of the Black Middle Class (BMC) is remarkable when you consider its odds—its development stunted by racism experienced at both the macro (i.e. racist policies as implemented by the State) and micro (racist attitudes and violent threats from whites in everyday life). So, how then could a BMC possibly emerge in a racist climate that denied Blacks its civic rights? Drawing upon canonical and contemporary texts about the Black middle class, we will answer these questions by focusing on the topics of race, culture, family structure, occupational mobility, national movements, local resistance, and inequality to illuminate how Blacks have questioned, resisted, and struggled with and against racial prejudice and discrimination to achieve a middle class standing.

We will discuss the upward mobility of Blacks occurring in three distinct historical periods—Post-Emancipation, Early 20th century, and the Civil Rights era forward. The course moves from the historical emergence of the Black middle class, through its growth, albeit quite tenuous, to its contemporary obstacles. Understanding the precariousness of the Black middle class position is understudied, but is important for understanding how inequality spans the purview of the Black working class and poor.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- Students will be able to identify the political, economic, and social conditions that gave rise to and has shaped the tenuousness of the Black middle-class
- Students will compare and contrast racial and class theories to demonstrate their understanding of the rise of the Black middle-class
- Students will be able to synthesize course material through writing assignments and presentation activities

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Final grades will be determined as follows:

70% TWO ANALYTIC PAPERS: Essays should be 7-10 pages in length; each is worth 35% of your final grade and will be assessed based on how well students logically develop and support an argument, drawing from seminar discussions and assigned readings. Paper due dates are as follows:

- First paper assignment due: Thursday, October 15th at the beginning of seminar
- Second paper assignment due: Monday, December 14th, 3pm, 410 Barrows (my mailbox)

Heed the deadlines as **late papers will not be accepted**. Hard copies only.

ON PLAGIARISM:

Uphold academic integrity. **Plagiarism is a serious offense, and if suspected, will be thoroughly investigated**. Please read and familiarize yourself with UC Berkeley's Code of Student Conduct regarding academic dishonesty at <http://www.students.berkeley.edu/osl/sja.asp?id=1143>. Note that plagiarism is not limited to stealing an entire paper. Using quotes without properly citing them or using ideas without acknowledging their source also constitute plagiarism. For more information about what plagiarism is and how to avoid it, please visit <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/instruct/guides/citations/html#Plagiarism>.

ON ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION:

30% ATTENDANCE AND SEMINAR PARTICIPATION: Attendance and *active* participation in during seminar meetings are mandatory. The quality of seminar is dependent on all of us being well prepared. To assess your preparedness, your participation grade is broke down as follows:

- %15 Reading questions and/or responses
- %15 Active Discussion

On your part, this means coming to class having carefully completed the reading carefully and having at least one question or comment prepared. These should be posted to the bCourses discussions folder by 7pm the day before section. Each week has its own folder. I will use your comments and questions to guide discussion. Please note that these questions/responses will be recorded for credit (on a check +/- system).

Your question or comment should either be *critical*, *synthetic*, or *applied*.

- *Critical* questions unpack the analysis to interrogate the authors' assumptions, evaluate the persuasiveness of arguments, or question its method and evidence.
- *Synthetic* questions connect different works to develop a conversation between authors and perspectives.

- *Applied* questions apply the perspectives and findings of scholarly works to real-world issues and problems—including *personal experience*.

**Please be sure to indicate each question's type from these three.*

- **(critical)** Is Benjamin Bowser correct in his claim that Blacks middle-class accession is more likely to have occurred through periods of quiescence rather than through hard work? (see *The Black Middle-Class Social Mobility—and Vulnerability*)
- **(synthetic)** How do W.E.B. DuBois and E Franklin Frazier's expectations of the Black middle-class differ? (see DuBois' "Talented Tenth" and Frazier's *Black Bourgeoisie*)
- **(applied)** Would the re-institution of affirmative action aid more Blacks in moving up the class ladder?

These questions should guide and excite our discussion. Your presence does not equal participation. Make every effort to speak in class; this is a forum for exploring ideas and you have absolutely nothing to lose and everything to gain by adding your two cents! Be sure to bring the readings to class to reference them during discussion.

Another component to your participation in seminar are student-led discussions. You, along with a partner, will have the choice to choose which readings you wish to present.

You are also required to attend office hours at least **twice** during the semester. Clear written expression is the companion of clear thinking. Clear writing, moreover, requires a great deal of rewriting. Take advantage of our peer-review sessions, writing tutoring at the Student Learning Center, and myself!

READING MATERIALS:

All of the assigned readings can be found on the bCourses "files" page, which you will have access to once enrolled in the course.

COURSE READINGS AND SCHEDULE:

WEEK 1: AUGUST 27TH **INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE**

WEEK 2: SEPTEMBER 3RD **HISTORICAL EMERGENCE OF THE BLACK MIDDLE-CLASS**

- Collins, Sharon M. 1983. "The Making of the Black Middle Class." *Social Problems*, pp. 369-382.
- DuBois, W.E.B. Du Bois, W. E. B. (1996 [1899]). *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social*

Study. University of Pennsylvania Press. Chapter 11 (only section on "Incomes"); pp. 168-178 & 15 (only section on "Social Classes and Amusements"); pp. 309-321

- Frazier, Franklin E. 1997 [1957]. *Black Bourgeoisie: The Book That Brought the Shock of Self-Revelation to Middle-Class Blacks in America*. Free Press. Chapter 1 (pp. 31-41)

WEEK 3: SEPTEMBER 10TH

WEALTH AND INCOME DISPARITY BETWEEN MIDDLE-CLASS BLACKS AND WHITES

- *Oliver, Melvin L. and Thomas M. Shapiro. 1995. *Black Wealth/White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality*. New York: Routledge. Chapter 2, 4 (pp. 33-52; 67-90).
- Heflin, Colleen and Mary Pattillo. 2006. "Poverty in the Family: Race, Siblings and Socioeconomic Heterogeneity." *Social Science Research*. Vol. 35(4) 804-822.
- O'Brien, Rourke L. 2012. "Depleting Capital? Race, Wealth and Informal Financial Assistance." *Social Forces* 91(2): 375-396.

WEEK 4: SEPTEMBER 17TH

NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT: THE INNER-CITY

- Pattillo-McCoy, Mary. 2000. *Black Picket Fences: Privilege and Peril Among the Black Middle Class*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Introduction, Chapters 3 & 4 (pp. 31-90).

WEEK 5: SEPTEMBER 24TH

NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT: BLACK GENTRIFICATION IN THE INNER-CITY

- Pattillo, Mary. *Black on the Block: The Politics of Race and Class in the City*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 2 (pp. 81-110)
- Taylor, Monique M. *Harlem: Between Heaven and Hell*. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press. Chapters 3 & 4 (pp. 57-127)

WEEK 6: OCTOBER 1ST

NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT: THE SUBURBS

- Lacy, Karyn R. 2007. *Blue-Chip Black: Race, Class, and Status in the New Black Middle Class*. University of California Press. Chapter 1 & 2 (pp. 21-71)

WEEK 7: OCTOBER 8TH

DEBATES OF RACIAL UPLIFT: THE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AMONG THE BLACK MIDDLE-CLASS

- DuBois, W.E.B. 1903. "The Talented Tenth" in *The Negro Problem: A Series of Articles by Representative American Negroes of Today*. New York: James Pott & Co., pp. 33-75.
- Pattillo-McCoy, Mary. 2007. *Black on the Block: The Politics of Race and Class in the City*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 3 (pp. 113-147).
- Taylor, Monique M. *Harlem: Between Heaven and Hell*. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press. Chapters 6 (pp. 159-169)

WEEK 8: OCTOBER 15TH

PARSING CLASS IN THE BLACK-WHITE ACHIEVEMENT GAP: ACADEMIC SUCCESS AND STRATEGIES AMONG BLACK MIDDLE-CLASS STUDENTS

- Marsh, Kris, Cassandra Chaney and Derrick Jones. "The Strengths of High-Achieving Black High School Students in a Racially Diverse Setting." *Journal of Negro Education* 81(1):39-51.
- Allen, Quaylan. 2010. "Racial Microaggressions: The Schooling Experiences of Black Middle-Class Males in Arizona's Secondary Schools," *Journal of African American Males in Education*, Vol. 1 (2): 125-143.

***ANALYTIC PAPER #1 DUE**

WEEK 9: OCTOBER 22ND

PART I: EFFECTS OF CLASS MOBILITY ON FAMILY STRUCTURE

- Hout, Michael. 1984. "Occupational Mobility of Black Men: 1982 to 1973." *American Sociological Review*. Vol. 49, No. 3: 308-322.
- McAdoo, Harriette Pipes. 1978. "Factors Related to Stability in Upwardly Mobile Black Families." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 40:761-776.

WEEK 10: OCTOBER 29TH

PART II: EFFECTS OF CLASS MOBILITY ON MIDDLE-CLASS BLACKS' MARRIAGE OUTCOMES

- Marsh, Kris, William A. Darity, Jr., Philip N. Cohen, Lynne M. Casper and Danielle Salters. "The Emerging Black Middle Class: Single and Living Alone." *Social Forces* 86(2): 735-762

- Banks, Ralph Richard. 2011. *Is Marriage for White People? How the African-American Marriage Decline Affects Everyone*. Penguin Group: New York, NY. Chapter 1 (pp. 5-16)
- Clarke, Averil Y. 2011. *Inequalities of Love: College-Educated Black Women and the Barriers to Romance and Family*. Duke University Press: Durham & London. Chapter 3 (pp. 115-158)

WEEK 11: NOVEMBER 5TH
CONSTRUCTIONS OF BLACK MIDDLE-CLASS SEXUALITY

- Hill-Collins, Patricia. 2005. *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism*. New York: Routledge. Chapter 5 (pp. 149-180)

WEEK 12: NOVEMBER 19TH
THE INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION OF MIDDLE-CLASS BLACKS

- Lacy, Karyn R. 2007. *Blue-Chip Black: Race, Class, and Status in the New Black Middle Class*. University of California Press. Chapter 5 (pp. 150-184).
- Hunt, Matthew and Rashawn Ray. "Social Class Identification Among Black Americans: Trends and Determinants, 1974–2010," *American Behavioral Scientist*, Vol 56(11) 1462–1480

WEEK 13: NOVEMBER 12TH
CULTURAL SOCIALIZATION OF THE BLACK MIDDLE-CLASS

- Frazier, Franklin E. 1997 [1957]. *Black Bourgeoisie: The Book That Brought the Shock of Self-Revelation to Middle-Class Blacks in America*. Free Press. Chapters 6 (pp. 112-128) & Chapter 9 (pp. 195-212)
- Pattillo-McCoy, Mary. 2000. *Black Picket Fences: Privilege and Peril Among the Black Middle Class*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 6-7 (pp. 117-166).
- Banks, Patricia Ann. 2012. "Cultural Socialization in Black Middle-Class Families," *Cultural Sociology*, Vol. 6, No. 1: 61-73.

WEEK 14: DECEMBER 3RD
DIASPORIC BLACK MIDDLE-CLASS

- Rollock, Nicola, Carol Vincent, David Gilborn, and Stephen Ball. 2013. "Middle class by profession': Class status and identification amongst the Black middle classes," *Ethnicities*, Vol. 13 (4): 253-275.
- Ndletyana, Mcebisi. 2014. "Middle-Class in South Africa: Significance, Role and Impact" Institute for Strategic Reflection, Johannesburg, South Africa

WEEK 15: FINALS WEEK

ANALYTIC PAPER #2 DUE, MONDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2015, 3PM, 410 BARROWS (MY MAILBOX)