

# Exploring W.E.B. Du Bois' Sociological Approach

## Course Outline

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### What is the course about?

W.E.B. Du Bois was a writer, scholar and civil rights activist who pioneered a new way to use sociology. In his quest to dispel social darwinism, he architected America's most sophisticated quantitative research on race and the Black population. This interdisciplinary course takes us on a journey through Du Bois life's work. Through books, articles, blogs and data visualizations, we will explore the steps he took for his studies in Philadelphia and Atlanta. Students will be able to experiment with some of these ideas with a project that has them choose an area of NYC to see how socio-economics and external conditions shape the community.

### What do I want people to learn?

- How Du Bois' sociological approach helps us quantify a community and measure growth.
- What the experience of building Du Bois' groundbreaking sociological framework was like.
- How the Du Bois visualizations told a powerful story of Black resilience in America.
- The importance of data storytelling and the impact it can have.

### Outline

1. Historical Context - What motivated Du Bois?
  - a. "The Problem of the 20th century is the problem of the Color-Line"
  - b. Textbook readings - The Scholar Denied
  - c. Defining Social Darwinism
  - d. Data Visualization examples; Trans-Atlantic Slavery, Great Migration
  - e. Introduce Class Project- Ask students to define a neighborhood that's important to them.
2. Sociological Approach - Du Bois' strategy
  - a. Establishing a scientific school of sociology
  - b. Textbook readings - The Philadelphia Negro
  - c. Data Visualization examples; Segregation in Schools

- d. Selected readings
3. Data Storytelling - 1900 World Expo Exhibit
- a. Importance of Data Storytelling
  - b. Aristotle's Three Pillars of Persuasion
  - c. Textbook Reading - W.E.B. Du Bois's Data Portraits
  - d. Selected Plates - Relevant past and present and future.
    - i. Plate 27 - Occupations of Negroes and Whites in America
    - ii. Plate 26 - Occupations of Negroes in Georgia, 1890, males over 10
    - iii. Plate 31 - Income and Expenditure of 150 Negro Families in Atlanta, GA
    - iv. Plate 25 - Assessed Value of Household and Kitchen Furniture Owned By GA Negroes.
    - v. Plate 19 - Acres of Land Owned by Negroes in Georgia
    - vi. Plate 20 - Land Owned by Negroes in Georgia, USA, 1870 - 1900
    - vii. Plate 21 - Valuation of Town and City Property
    - viii. Plate 3 - The State of the US according to their Negro population.
    - ix. Plate 8 - Migration of Negroes, 1890
    - x. Plate 38 - Distribution of the Negroes in the US
  - e. Selected Readings - The Princess Steel, The City Born Great
4. Shaping New York: Past, Present and Future
- a. Applying the "Duboisian" style to present-day data.
  - b. Selected Readings; Museum of the City of New York exhibit
  - c. Proposing a sociological study on a NYC community.

## Introduction

W.E.B. Du Bois was a scholar, civil rights activist, author, public intellectual, and sociologist. He was also one of the first American data visualization pioneers and deserves to be celebrated. He completed his graduate work at the University of Berlin and Harvard University and became the first African American to earn a doctorate from Harvard. Having completed his studies, he became a professor of history, sociology and economics at Atlanta University. It was at Atlanta University that he leveraged history, statistics and demographics to create his portfolio of 60

full-color charts, graphs and tables. [2] This work, commissioned by Thomas Calloway, documented the growth made by Black Americans in all phases of life just 35 years post-emancipation. Exhibited at the 1900 Paris World Fair, this work set the framework for a scientific approach to sociology. Atlanta University would be recognized as the first school of sociology many decades later. Du Bois was definitely a man of many firsts.

## Historical Context

Despite Du Bois' many accomplishments, he could not escape the impact slavery had on America. Although there was a brief but fleeting reprieve with the post emancipation Reconstruction Era post slavery, systematic legislative discrimination in larger parts of the country known as Jim Crow laws were introduced. In addition to this there was a popular theory that people of African descent were inherently inferior and incapable of functioning as social equals with those of European descent. [3] This sparked Du Bois to confront and dismantle what became to be known as "social darwinism". He wanted to show that externally imposed social conditions such as slavery, lynchings and Jim Crow were the roadblocks to Black American experiencing equality. His data visualizations were able to show that Black Americans were not culturally inferior but culturally challenged by historical contingencies.

## Sociological Approach

Du Bois insisted that the newly emerging social sciences be built on careful, empirical research focused on human action in order to pass the test as genuine science. His work in 1897, "The Philadelphia Negro" pioneered this approach. [4,5]. He combined his research with census data to create visual illustrations of his findings using various graphs and charts. Interjecting science into sociology, his work was the most sophisticated quantitative research on race and the Black population. He was the first social scientist to establish a sociological laboratory to determine the scientific causes of racial inequality. In this manner, Du Bois treated claims of inherent race superiority as hypotheses to be accepted or rejected on the basis of data collected through the best scientific methods available.

In contrast, Social Darwinist Theory had no data to back it up. Du Bois referred to this as "car window sociology," quick and superficial generalizations about complex social phenomena like the impressions one might gather by glancing at scenes through the window of a fast-moving automobile.

## Taxonomy

Du Bois represented the findings from his research in a multitude of charts and graphs and vibrant colors. [6] The taxonomy is as follows:

## Chart Type

Type	Number	Percentage
Bar	30	52.63%
Maps	9	15.79%
Circular	7	12.28%
Area	8	14.04%
Line	3	5.26%
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Selected Plates

For the course, we have chosen a select group of plates (visualizations) as defined in [2] to analyze. In addition to looking at the design and color of the plates, we can also consider recreating these visualizations with original as well as alternative data sets. The plates are listed below:



1. Plate 27 - Occupations of Negroes and Whites in America - This is the wedge chart that breaks down labor professions by race. You can compare percentage breakdown by profession.



2. Plate 26 - Occupations of Negroes in Georgia, 1890, males over 10 - This chart documents black male workers in the year 1890. Very similar to Plate #45.



3. Plate 31 - Income and Expenditure of 150 Negro Families in Atlanta, GA - Breaks down the expenses for 150 black families. Homeownership is implied for the top two income brackets as there is no rent expenditure. Broken down by rent, food, clothes, direct taxes, other expenses such as education, savings, travel, etc. Would love to know the breakdown of families in each income bracket.



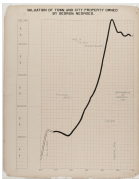
4. Plate 25 - The famous "Du Bois Spiral": Assessed Value of Household and Kitchen Furniture Owned By GA Negroes. (Present-day use may be device ownership) Original time period is the 25 year span from 1875 through 1899.



5. Plate 19 - Acres of Land Owned by Negroes in Georgia - This is an onomatopoeia data visual as it creates the shape of Georgia.



6. Plate 20 - Land Owned by Negroes in Georgia, USA, 1870 - 1900 - Georgia is interesting present day with everything from voter suppression, etc.



7. Plate 21 - Valuation of Town and City Property



8. Plate 3 - The State of the US according to their Negro population.



9. Plate 8 - Migration of Negroes, 1890



10. Plate 38 - Distribution of the Negroes in the US

## Data Storytelling

W.E.B. Du Bois wanted to interject science, data and methodology into sociology. His research

into Black American culture and lifestyle told a story of resilience.

Aristotle thought that a speaker's ability to persuade an audience is based on how well the speaker appeals to them through:

Ethos - Ethics (Credibility)

Pathos - Emotion (Feeling)

Logos - Logic (Data)

While Du Bois developed a sociological framework to show Black Americans are capable of functioning as social equals, social darwinism had no data to back up its theory.

## Present Day Project

In addition to discussing the visualizations, students will get an opportunity to walk through Du Bois' process as he was creating the sociological study for Philadelphia. Using Du Bois' Philadelphia Negro as a guide, students can choose a NYC community to create a proposed study.

## Course of Action

Du Bois outlined his course of action and prepared six different questionnaires:

1. **A family survey** asking about family size, marriage, literacy, employment, income, place of birth.
2. **An individual survey** with similar inquiries.
3. **A home survey** noting home ownership, rent, those with running water
4. **A street survey** to collect data from the various small streets and alleys
5. A survey for **organizations and institutions**
6. A survey for **house servants**

Students will be asked to keep a journal of sorts throughout the semester. They will be asked to record what community means to them. They will also select a NYC community to begin analyzing using the following data tools:

1. [The Subway Above Ground - Sound of Inequality by Brian Foo](#)
2. [The Subway Above Ground - NYC Subway Inequality Map by Brian Foo](#)
3. [Data 2 Go NYC - Mapping Tool](#)
4. [The Art of Data - MCNY](#)

Using the data tools, class discussions and selected readings, students will develop a proposal for a sociological study. The study will provide a demographic profile of the selected community followed by a historical background. The study will then identify a problem and set up a framework to analyze the community.

## References

- The Scholar Denied by Aldon D. Morris
- W. E. B. Du Bois's Data Portraits Visualizing Black America, Whitney Battle-Baptise, Britt Rusert, Princeton Architectural Press, 2018, ISBN 978-1616897062
- Social Darwinism <https://www.britannica.com/topic/social-Darwinism>
- The Philadelphia Negro, A Social Study  
<https://www.upenn.edu/pennpress/book/516.html>
- The Philadelphia Negro, scanned original:  
[https://www.google.com/books/edition/\\_/sqwJAAAAIAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&pg=PR1&dq=editions:gKWdGndN6W4C](https://www.google.com/books/edition/_/sqwJAAAAIAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&pg=PR1&dq=editions:gKWdGndN6W4C)
- What is a Du Bois Style Visualization, Anthony Starks, 2019  
<https://github.com/ajstarks/dubois-data-portraits/blob/master/dubois-style.pdf>
- [The Land Where Blues Began - Spencer Baucke](#)
- [The Great Migration - Chantilly Jaggernaut and Spencer Baucke](#)
- [The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade - Spencer Baucke](#)
- [School Segregation in America - Spencer Baucke](#)
- [America's Schools: Still Separate But Equal - Candra McRae](#)
- [Simulated Dendrochronology - Pedro Cruz](#)
- [Mapping Immigration Flow Through Tree Rings - Allen Hillery](#)
- [The Art of Data - MCNY](#)
- [Data 2 Go NYC - Mapping Tool](#)
- [The Subway Above Ground - Sound of Inequality by Brian Foo](#)
- [The Subway Above Ground - NYC Subway Inequality Map by Brian Foo](#)
- [A Priceless Archive of Ordinary Life - Cynthia Greenlee](#)
- [The Princess Steel - Short Story by W.E.B. Du Bois](#)
- [AD 2150. 1950](#) by W.E.B. Du Bois
- [Tableau Foundation Racial Equity Stories](#)
- [Where New Yorkers Moved to Escape Coronavirus](#) By [Azi Paybarah](#), [Matthew Bloch](#) and [Scott Reinhard](#)

## Syllabus

Class Duration - 16 Weeks

Frequency - Once a week, 2.5 hours

### Course Breakdown

Journaling (10%) - Before and After class write what you expect to learn in the session and recap a main takeaway from class discussions. Serve as a way to document the experience.

Assigned Readings (15%) - Summarize main takeaways from weekly assigned readings.

Questions to ponder and critique (15%) -

Project (60%) - Proposal; choose a community based on Brian Foo's visualization. Assess the low income area based on census data and other sources.

Bonus: I want to find **William Andrew Rogers**. He was DuBois' main person for coordinating data visualizations. He went to Atlanta University. He graduated with an A.B. Sociology. He may have lived in Petersburg, VA.

### Week 1 - Historical Context

The Scholar Denied by Aldon Morris

- Intro Race and the Birth of American Sociology (pages 1-5)
- Chapter 1 The Rise of Scientific Sociology in America (pages 6 - 14)
- Chapter 2 Du Bois, Scientific Sociology and Race (pages 15 - 54)

### Week 2 Historical Context

The Scholar Denied by Aldon Morris

- Chapter 3 The Du Bois-Atlanta School of Sociology (pages 55-99)
- Chapter 7 Intellectual Schools and The Atlanta School (pages 168-194)
- Chapter 8 Legacies and Conclusions (pages 195 - 224)

### Week 3 Sociological Approach

The Philadelphia Negro by W.E.B. Du Bois

- Introduction
- Chapter 1 The Scope (pages 1-4)
- Chapter 2 The Problem (pages 5-9)
- Chapter 3 The Negro in Philadelphia 1638 - 1820 (pages 10-24)
- Chapter 4 The Negro in Philadelphia 1820 - 1896 (pages 25-45)

### Week 4 Sociological Approach

The Philadelphia Negro by W.E.B. Du Bois

- Chapter 7 Sources of the Negro Population (pages 73-82)
  - The Seventh Ward
  - The City
- Chapter 8 Education and Illiteracy (pages 83-96)
- Chapter 9 The Occupation of Negroes (pages 97-146)

### Week 5 Sociological Approach

The Philadelphia Negro by W.E.B. Du Bois



- Chapter 10 The Health of Negroes (pages 147-163)
- Chapter 11 The Negro Family (pages 164-196)
- Chapter 13 The Negro Criminal (pages 235-268)

#### Week 6 Sociological Approach

The Philadelphia Negro by W.E.B. Du Bois

- Chapter 13 The Negro Criminal (pages 235-268)

Additional Reading

- [Broken Windows Theory Debunked - Northeastern University](#)
- [Broken Windows Theory and How Stop and Frisk was Born - NPR](#)

#### Week 7 Du Bois Visualizations

W.E.B. Du Bois' Data Portraits by Whitney Battle-Baptiste and Britt Rusert

- Introduction (pages 7-23)
- American Negro at Paris, 1900 (pages 24-37)
- The Cartography of W.E.B. Du Bois' Color Line (pages 38-41)

Additional Reading

- What is a Du Bois Style Visualization, Anthony Starks, 2019  
<https://github.com/ajstarks/dubois-data-portraits/blob/master/dubois-style.pdf>

#### Week 8 Du Bois Visualizations

W.E.B. Du Bois' Data Portraits by Whitney Battle-Baptiste and Britt Rusert

- Population Plates 2 - 6
- Migration Plate 8

Data Visualizations

- The Great Migration
- Immigration Flow

#### Week 9 Du Bois Visualizations

W.E.B. Du Bois' Data Portraits by Whitney Battle-Baptiste and Britt Rusert

- Education Plates 14 - 17
- Job Plates 25 - 27; 31,45

Data Visualizations

- School Segregation - Candra McRae and Spencer Baucke

#### Week 10 Du Bois Visualizations

W.E.B. Du Bois' Data Portraits by Whitney Battle-Baptiste and Britt Rusert

- Land Ownership Plates 19 - 21

Additional Reading

- [Lessons From Visualizing Systematic Racism in Baltimore](#)

Data Visualizations

- [The White L vs The Black Butterfly by Omar Abassi](#)

Week 11 New York

- [The Census and Who We Are.- Museum of the City of New York](#)
- [Beyond the Numbers: The 2020 Census and Covid-19 Pandemic - Museum of the City of New York](#)
- [Simulated Dendrochronology - Pedro Cruz](#)
- [Mapping Immigration Flow Through Tree Rings - Allen Hillery](#)

Week 12 New York

- [The Art of Data - MCNY](#)
- [Data 2 Go NYC - Mapping Tool](#)
- [The Subway Above Ground - Sound of Inequality by Brian Foo](#)
- [The Subway Above Ground - NYC Subway Inequality Map by Brian Foo](#)

Week 13 New York

- [A Priceless Archive of Ordinary Life - Cynthia Greenlee](#)
- [AD 2150. 1950](#)

Week 14 New York

TBA

Week 15 Final Presentations

Week 16 Final Presentations