

## **Black Workers in American Society**

**37:575:303:01**

**Wednesday, 7:15 pm to 10:05 pm, Labor Education Center, Room 115**

Instructor: Debbie L. Hines  
Phone: 732 932-4252  
Email: [dlhines@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:dlhines@rci.rutgers.edu)  
By appointment, if before or after class does not work well

### **Black Workers in American Society**

In this class we will examine the evolving position of black workers in the U.S. economy, how it has changed at key points throughout U.S. history to the present day, and how access to opportunities in the labor market is informed by racial stratification in the larger society. The goal of the course is to challenge common notions of how people succeed in the labor market and to explore how systemic patterns of exclusion limit opportunities for blacks. The course will focus on structural explanations for racial inequality in the labor market rather than purely individualistic ones. We will examine the social constructs of race and class to understand how blacks at all levels in the labor market face common challenges in navigating the labor market.

### **Grading Criteria:**

- Attendance and Participation in class discussions (10 points)
- Ice-breaker (5 points)
- Questions and Online Harvard IAT Survey (15 points)
- Debate (10 points)
- Interview (10 points)
- Mid-term Exam (20 points)
- Final Exam (30 points)

Credit also extended for attendance and in-class contributions. Please note that excessive unexcused absences will lower your grade. Unexcused absences in excess of 3 classes may result in a failing grade.

### **Laptop/Recording Policy:**

Students are permitted to bring and use a laptop computer in class, for taking notes and viewing class readings. However, please do not engage in laptop-related activities that may distract other students. Students are not permitted to record, videotape, or photograph any classroom lecture or activity, absent prior express consent and authorization by the Instructor.

### **Course Materials:**

Course reading materials and questions may be found on Sakai under "Resources," and "Announcements." The instructor reserves the right to supplement, substitute, and/or modify the listed reading selections.

Course SAS Learning Objectives:

### **Goal A: Analyze the degree to which forms of human difference shape a person's experiences of and perspectives on the world.**

- How racial categorization, created through the social construction of race affects one's position in the labor market and consequently produces racial labor market inequality. Through this approach we will examine the socioeconomic dimension of the claim that although race is not a scientifically "real" concept, it is real in its consequences.

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### **Goal D: Analyze issues of social justice across local and global contexts.**

- Develop an understanding of concepts such as hierarchy, power and hegemony to developing a working knowledge of social change, particularly one that uses a complex, nuanced analysis of a social problem to devise effective policies to end social and economic inequality.

### **Goal I: Explain and be able to assess the relationship among assumptions, method, evidence, arguments, and theory in social and historical analysis.**

- View different approaches and strategies to build arguments by critiquing the author's claims presented and compare them to other readings/authors. Draw linkages and distinctions by taking apart the author's thesis, arguments and supporting evidence. To build your own arguments and supporting them.

### **Goal M: Understand different theories about human culture, social identity, economic entities, political systems and other forms of social organization.**

- We will use the idea that the labor market, as well as society at large, is organized in such a way that it can be examined by using a structural approach.
- Through this lens we can view black's position in the US. Economy as part of a racial structure fortified by mechanisms such as institutional discrimination, exclusion, and access.
- This idea will be explored through multiple media, films, assigned readings to represent a variety of perspectives, class discussions, and hypothetical situations designed to incorporate real life experiences in group exercises.

### **Goal N: Apply concepts about human and social behavior to particular questions or situations.**

- We will approach issues such as the labor market consequences of persistent school segregation, resistance to integration, affirmative action, racial disparities in unemployment, the persistence of racial wage gap, amidst a shrinking education gap, using concepts such as social structure, social closure, hegemony, bias, and homophily.

***Avoid plagiarism or other violations of academic integrity! Be careful not to “copy” phrases or sentences excessively from the readings. The goal is to put the ideas into your own words!***

#### **Week 1: September 02, 2015**

*Course Overview*

*Introduction: Discussion of key themes and concepts used throughout the course*

*Lets Talk About Race: Lets Talk About Race: Film “A Class Divided”*

#### **Week 2: September 09, 2015**

**Assignment Due: Icebreaker**

*Understanding Racial Economic Stratification in the U.S.*

Readings:

1. Spivack, Amer. Sociological Assoc., “*Race, Ethnicity, and the American Labor Market: What’s at Work?*”
2. Russell Sage Foundation, “*Equal Employment Opportunity in America*”

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### **Week 3: September 16, 2015**

*The Historical Formation of Race and Work in U.S. Economy: Post-Emancipation*

Documentary “Unchained Memories: Stories from Slave Narratives”

Readings: Steinberg, “The Reconstruction of Black Servitude After the Civil War”

Video: Jim Crow Laws

### **Week 4: September 23, 2015**

**Assignment Due: Questions (1&2)**

*The Historical formation of Race and Work in U.S. Economy: The Industrial Era*

Readings:

1. Nelson, “Divided We Stand: American Workers and the Struggle for Black Equality. Introduction
2. Katznelson, When Affirmative Action Was White, Chapter

### **Week 5: September 30, 2015**

*Black Workers, Labor Unions and the Civil Rights Movement*

Readings: Honey, “Labor and the Civil Rights Movement at the Crossroads: Martin Luther King, Black Workers and Memphis Sanitation Strike”

Film “At the River I Stand”

### **Week 6: October 07, 2015**

*Working Class and Poor Blacks*

Readings:

1. Kozol, “Shame of a Nation”
2. Reskin, “The Development of Affirmative Action in Employment”

### **Week 7: October 14, 2015            Mid-Term**

### **Week 8: October 21, 2015**

**Assignment: Project Implicit IAT (Race and Skin Tone Discrimination Test)**

*Black Workers, Education and Management Professionals*

Readings:

1. Jones and Schmitt, “Has Education Paid off for Black Workers?”
2. Collins, “Black Mobility in White Corporations”

### **Week 9: October 28, 2015**

*Access to Work*

1. Bertand and Mullainathan, “Are Emily and Greg More Employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A Field Experiment of Labor Market Discrimination”
2. Pager, “The Mark of a Criminal Record”

### **Week 10: November 04, 2015**

*Institutionalized and Structural Exclusion*

Readings: Kasinitz and Rosenberg, “Missing the Connection: Social Isolation and Employment on the Brooklyn Waterfront”

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**Week 11: November 11, 2015**

**Assignment Due: Interview**

*Black Women Workers*

Readings:

1. Ortiz and Roscigno, Discrimination, Women, and Work: Processes and Variations by Race & Class”
2. National Women Law Center “Closing the Wage Gap Especially Important for Women of Color in Difficult Times”

*You tube video: Katie Couric “Hospital Nurse”*

**Week 12: November 18, 2015**

*Understanding Institutional Discrimination and Mobility*

Readings: Chima and Wharton, “African Americans and the Workplace: Overview of Persistent Discrimination”

Readings: Isaacs, “Economic Mobility of Black and White Families”

**Week 13: November 25, 2015 Thanksgiving Holiday**

*Black Workers, Education and Management Jobs*

Readings: Dickerson, “Black Employment, Segregation, and the Social Organization of Metropolitan Labor Markets” (**read up until the “Data and Methods Section”**)

White Privilege: Brown Eye Blue Eye - Part 2

**Week 14: December 02, 2015**

*Black Young Workers*

Readings: EPI, “The Kids Aren’t Alright: A Labor Market Analysis of Young Workers”

Quane, Julius Wilson and Hwang, “The Urban Job Crisis

**FINAL EXAM: TBD**