

Black Workers in American Society
37:575:303:01
Wednesday, 7:40 pm to 10:30 pm, Scott Hall Room 116

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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:

- Ice-breaker (10 points)
- Questions and Online Harvard IAT Survey (15 points)
- Debate (10 points)
- Interview (15 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 may be found on Sakai under "Resources," and assignments may be found on Sakai under "Assignments." Note the "DUE DATE" for all assignments. Do not turn assignments in class. Unexcused late assignments will result in a point deduction. 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: January 20, 2016

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: January 27, 2016

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: February 03, 2016

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: February 10, 2016

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: February 17, 2016

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: February 24, 2016

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

Working Class and Poor Blacks

Readings:

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

Week 7: March 02, 2016

Mid-Term

Week 8: March 09, 2016

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: March 23, 2016

Assignment: Interview

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”

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Week 10: March 30, 2016

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 11: April 06, 2016

Assignment: Affirmative Action Debate

Institutionalized and Structural Exclusion

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

Week 12: April 13, 2016

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: April 20, 2016

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

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”

Week 14: April 27, 2016

FINAL EXAM