

Elvira Basevich, Ph.D.

*W.E.B. Du Bois and Late Modern German Philosophy:
Advanced Philosophy / Africana Studies Course*

PURPOSE OF THE COURSE

Without doubt, W.E.B. Du Bois was heavily influenced by German philosophy, but Du Bois scholars contest the scope and depth of the influence. Save for reflecting on Du Bois's intellectual history, Du Bois scholars have yet to provide a systematic treatment of his debt to—and creative rethinking of—central concepts in late modern German philosophy. Du Bois freely draws on Kant, Herder, Hegel, Marx, Weber, and Dilthey to theorize black self-determination in his homeland, the United States. In this course, we will survey some central concepts in Du Bois's political philosophy in relation to their original formulation in German philosophy. For example, we will assess Du Bois's refashioning of the notion of 'the people' (*das Volk*) in his theory of race and consider whether the idea of a 'rightful' constitutional state (*der Rechtsstaat*) informs his critique of American democracy. We will also examine his philosophy of social science, his critique of Marxian ethics, and his account of the relation between race and American civic identity. Please note that this course is designed to serve as a rigorous introduction to both Du Bois's political philosophy and to late modern German philosophy. No prior knowledge of the topic is necessary to succeed in this course.

SAMPLE READINGS

Week 1-2

Du Bois in Berlin in the 1890s

- (1) Axel R. Schäfer, "W.E.B. Du Bois, German Social Thought, and the Racial Divide in American Progressivism, 1892-1909"
- (2) Manning Marable, *W.E.B. Du Bois: Black Radical Democrat*, chps 1 & 2
- (3) Kenneth Barkin, "'Berlin Days,' 1892–1894: W.E.B. Du Bois and German Political Economy"
- (4) Du Bois, "Bismark"
- (5) Du Bois, "The Present Condition of German Politics, 1893"
- (6) Du Bois, "The New Homeland (*Das neue Vaterland*)"

Recommended: Basevich, *Du Bois: The Lost and the Found*, Introduction & chp. 2; Aldon D. Morris, *The Scholar Denied: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Birth of Modern Sociology*, chp. 6.

Week 3-5

Du Bois's Racialism and 'das Volk'

The Concept of 'das Volk':

- (1) Frederick C. Beiser, *The German Historicist Tradition*, Introduction & chp. 3
- (2) Herder: *Philosophical Writings*, Part IV "Philosophy of History"
- (3) Kant, "Review of Herder's Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind"

- (4) G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on Philosophy of History*, Lectures 3 & 4;
- (5) Frank Kirkland, “Kant on ‘Race’ and ‘Transition’ (*Ubergang*) & Hegel on ‘Race’ and ‘Development’ (*Entwicklung*)”

Recommended: Gooding-Williams, *In the Shadow of Du Bois*, Introduction & chp 2; Herder: *Philosophical Writings*, ed. Desmond M. Clarke and Michael N. Forster.

Du Bois’s Creative Rethinking of the Concept of ‘*das Volk*’:

- (1) Du Bois, “On the Conservation of Races”
- (2) Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, chp. 1
- (3) Du Bois, “The Souls of White Folk” from *Darkwater*
- (4) Kwame Anthony Appiah, “The Uncompleted Argument: Du Bois and the Illusion of Race” & “The Concept of the Negro”
- (5) Paul C. Taylor, “Appiah’s Uncompleted Argument: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Reality of Race”
- (6) Chike Jeffers, “The Cultural Theory of Race: Yet Another Look at Du Bois’s ‘The Conservation of Races’”

Recommended: Basevich, *Du Bois: The Lost and the Found*, chp. 3

Week 6-8

Du Bois & Self-Respect

The Concept of Self-Respect:

- (1) Kant, *Groundwork*, Part 1
- (2) Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (excerpt on “self-consciousness” and “the master/slave dialectic”)
- (3) Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (excerpt on the social bases of self-respect)
- (4) Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, chps. 8 & 9

Du Bois’s Critique of Kantian Formulations of Self-Respect:

- (1) Du Bois, “Separation and Self-Respect,” in D. L. Lewis (ed.), *W.E.B. Du Bois: A Reader*. (Ontario: Fritzhery & Whiteside, 1995), 559-62.
- (2) Du Bois, “Segregation in the North”
- (3) Du Bois, “Counsels of Despair”
- (4) Du Bois, “Integration”

Strongly Recommended: Rogers, “Rereading Honneth: Exodus Politics and the Paradox of Recognition”; Paterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, chps. 2, 4, 11; Basevich, “Self-Respect & Self-Segregation: A Du Boisian Rejoinder to Kant and Rawls”

Week 9-10

The Theoretical Roots of Modern American Sociology

- (1) Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, chp. 2
- (2) Wilhem Dilthey, *The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences* (excerpt)
- (3) Gooding-Williams, *In the Shadow of Du Bois*, chp. 2
- (4) Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro*, chps. 1, 4, 16-18

- (5) Morris, *The Scholar Denied*, chps. 1-3.
- (6) Beiser, *The German Historicist Tradition*, chp. 8 (Recommended: chp 13)

Week 11-12

Du Bois and Marxian Ethics

Marx on the Self, Social Identity, and Ethics:

- (1) Karl Marx, “On the Jewish Question”
- (2) Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*
- (3) George C. Brenkert. *Marx’s Ethics of Freedom*, chp. 4
- (4) Jan Kandiyali, “The Importance of Others: Marx on Unalienated Production”
- (4) Rahel Jaeggi, “‘Like the Structure of Cotton Candy’: Being Oneself as Self-Appropriation” (chp. 9 from *Alienation*);

Du Bois’s Socialism:

- (1) Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, chps. 1-5, 8, 15-17.
- (2) Du Bois, “The Socialism of German Socialists”
- (3) Du Bois, “The Salvation of American Negroes Lies in Socialism”
- (4) Du Bois, “Karl Marx and the Negro”
- (5) Adolph Reed Jr., *W. E. B. Du Bois and American Political Thought: Fabianism and the Color Line*, chp. 9;
- (6) Marable, *W.E.B. Du Bois: Black Radical Democrat*, chp 5.

Strongly Recommended: Andrew Douglas, *Du Bois and the Critique of Competitive Society*; Ella Myers, “Beyond the Psychological Wage: Du Bois on White Domination”; Basevich, “Du Bois’s Socialism: On the Social Epistemology of Democratic Reason”

Weeks 13-15

Du Bois’s Politics: Cosmopolitan, Pan-African, or American Civic Nationalism?

Part I. Cosmopolitanism

- (1) Immanuel Kant, “First Definitive Article,” *Perpetual Peace*
- (2) Kant, “Idea for Universal History as Having a Cosmopolitan Purpose”
- (3) Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Lines of Descent*, chp. 2
- (4) Chike Jeffers, “Appiah’s Cosmopolitanism”
- (5) Inés Valdez, *Transnational Cosmopolitanism: Kant, Du Bois, and Justice as a Political Craft*, chps. 1-3

Part II. Pan-Africanism

- (1) Du Bois, “The Pan-African congresses: the story of a growing movement”
- (2) Du Bois, “To the world: Manifesto of the Second Pan-African Congress”
- (3) Valdez, *Transnational Cosmopolitanism*, chp. 4-5

Part III. American Civic Nationalism

- (1) Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, Part I
- (2) Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, “Sittlichkeit,” §§142-157, 182-208, 230-256, and §§257-271
- (3) Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, chp. 2
- (4) Du Bois, *Darkwater*, chp. 6
- (5) Lawrie Balfour, *Democracy’s Reconstruction: Thinking Politically with W.E.B. Du Bois*, chps. 1 & 6.

Recommended: Mills, *Black Rights/White Wrongs*; Basevich, *Du Bois: The Lost & The Found*, chps. 5-8; Basevich, “Du Bois’s Critique of American Democracy During the Jim Crow Era”