

**INTRO TO BLACK SOCIAL AND POLITICAL LIFE (AFAM 215) – Fall 2020**  
M/W 4:20 – 5:40pm (Central Time), Asynchronous Lectures, Synchronous Discussions

Professor Mary Pattillo

Office Hours: Mondays 4 – 5:30pm by Zoom, sign up at <http://bit.ly/officehourspattillo>

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Office Hours: Thursdays, 3-5pm by Zoom, email to make appt and get link

Course zoom passcode: afam215

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course is a survey of the contours of Black life from the perspective of the social sciences. What is the Black community, geographically speaking? Is that different from the social or political Black community? What is the history and current character of Black families? How much wealth is in the Black community, and how does that compare with the wealth of White or Latinx people? What are key concerns of Black politics, and how unified or fractured are Black political demands? What does Black identity look like among Black youth? What does Black youth culture portend for Black futures? This course answers these questions and others using insights from sociology, political science, psychology, anthropology, law, economics, history, and related fields. By studying social relations, political agency, and economic practices, we develop a more complex understanding of the forces, opportunities, and constraints operating within Black communities.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES:** At the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. Recognize and characterize the diversity of Black social and political life
2. Put Black life within structural and historical context
3. Comprehend and be able to deploy a range of theories about Black life and living
4. Analyze current events using Black Studies theories
5. Imagine possible futures of Black freedom

**EVALUATION:**

Grades are based on weekly “Quotation Blowup” group assignments due every Thursday (7 @ 10% each = 70%, you get two weeks off of your group’s choosing), and a final project (30%).

**ABOUT PROFESSOR PATTILLO**

I grew up in a mostly Black neighborhood in Milwaukee. And even though my mother had consciously chosen to raise us there, when I was a teenager she once said to me: “You can’t go through life only reading books about Black people or having Black friends. Why don’t you broaden your interests a bit?” It is in African American Studies that I read the work of scholar/activist W.E.B. Du Bois, who offers the best answer to my mom’s question. He wrote in 1904: “What is human progress and how is it emphasized? How do nations rise and fall? What is the meaning and value of certain human actions? Is there rhythm and law in the mass of the deeds of men [and women]—and if so how can it best be measured and stated—all such questions can be studied and answered in the case of the American Negro.” In other words, studying and being with Black people is as broad an interest as any, since studying and being with Black people is studying and being with the full array of humanity. I teach this class as a window into Blackness, which is a window into all humanity.

## IN THESE TIMES

This is my first time teaching remotely, and we are all still getting used to this new format. Add to that the fact that we are living through tumultuous times. Coronavirus, anti-Black police violence and the protests against it, the heated presidential election season, and nonstop media, all sit atop the many other daily features of Black life: paying the rent, going to school, raising families, cooking and eating, worshipping, creating, debating, and laying the dead to rest. I want the course to be relevant, and that means learning some history and placing what we are witnessing into theoretical and structural contexts. These times also challenge our abilities to focus and learn. While we try our best to stay engaged and on task, we must also be patient and generous.

## COURSE ORGANIZATION:

The course is a mix of synchronous and asynchronous elements.

- The lectures are required and offered asynchronously. That means they will be available on Canvas by Sunday night for you to watch in preparation for the discussions on Wednesdays. Lectures are short videos in which I frame the topic, present information and explain concepts.
- In addition to the lecture, there is a mix of required instructional material—readings, videos, and audios—to explore the content of the lecture in more depth.
- The lectures and instructional materials combine to replace the scheduled Monday class meeting, and what would be considered the out-of-class “homework,” in a usual in-person course.
- On Wednesdays we will meet together *synchronously* during the regularly scheduled class period for 80 minutes of discussion. This is our only time together so really try to attend and try to have your cameras on. I know this will not always be possible, but it is the goal.
- Each of you is assigned to a group. The 4 to 5 students in your group are your core partners throughout the class. Your first task is to name your group using some reference to Black social and political life (e.g., a writer, a song, a historical event, a political leader, a food item, etc). Your name is important since you have the option of doing your final project based on that name. But your group has to come to agreement.
- You, as an individual, will watch the lectures and review the required instructional material, and then you will coordinate with your group to discuss and process the material. Your group will submit the weekly “Quotation Blowup” assignments as a unit (just one person needs to upload the assignment). Your group will decide on your own when, how, and if to meet and communicate (e.g., Groupme, Slack, email, Whatsapp, group chat, Zoom, phone, socially distanced in-person, etc.). However you meet, your group assignments must be uploaded to Canvas.
- Your final project is done on your own.

## COURSE TIME COMMITMENT

This remote learning world is much less structured than in-person learning, and college is already pretty unstructured. So here is an approximation of how much time you might spend on this course and how to organize your work.

- Lectures: 20 minutes/week (available by Sunday night for the week)
- Discussion sections: 80 minutes/week (synchronous Wednesdays 4:20 to 5:40)
- Materials: 110 minutes/week (always available)
- Group discussions: 30 minutes/week (once you’ve consulted lectures, materials, or activity)
- Weekly assignment: 30 minutes/week (due Thursdays by midnight)
- Total time = ~ 4.5 hours/week, plus time for your individual final project

## WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS AND FINAL PROJECT

- The weekly “Quotation Blowup” assignments are the product of the week’s lecture, materials, and discussions. They represent your group’s processing of the week’s materials. Quotation Blowups are due by 11:59pm on Thursdays on Canvas. Below are more details:

- The assignment takes a quotation from the week’s required instructional materials and *blows it up* by challenging it, expanding it, parodying it, blasting it, historicizing it, remixing it, or otherwise taking the quote as a jumping off point for your group’s thinking.
- For these purposes, a *quotation* is a relatively small piece of text or (transcribed) video/audio, no more than 100 words or under a minute of audio/video, taken from one of the items in the week’s instructional material. It is the center of the assignment. You can bring in other quotes to support your blowup, but it’s not necessary.
- The format of the Quotation Blowup is up to your group and can change for every submission. You could submit: Power Point slides, a one-page written narrative, a cartoon, a song (or song lyrics), an interview-style audio recording, a photographic montage. This is your opportunity to be creative if you want. You have maximum flexibility, or you can just write it up.
- This is meant to be a short assignment, worth just 10% each. That means roughly one single-spaced page of writing, or 2 minutes of audio/video, or 3 photographs with a few sentences of caption.
- You must submit 7 Quotation Blowup assignments, but there are 9 possible weeks to submit, so you get two weeks off, of your group’s choosing.
- Grading is simple:
  - F (0 points) – no submission
  - C (7 points) – any submission that includes a quote from the week’s instructional materials
  - A (10 points) – actually blows up the quote, even if you are a bit off on the interpretation or the execution
- The final project is due Sunday, December 6<sup>th</sup> by 11:59pm (Chicago time) on Canvas. You have two options for the final project:
  - OPTION 1: Write a 5- to 7-page *paper* on *When They Call You a Terrorist*:
    - You have flexibility on the topic, but it should be related to Black social and political life, and should make clear the focus of your argument. Here are some prompts to get you thinking:
      - What does freedom mean in the book?
      - How do Black lived experiences motivate Black politics?
      - Is there anything unique about Blackness in southern California in comparison to other texts we’ve read?
      - How do class, gender, sexuality, place (and any other variables) intersect with Blackness in the book, and how does it matter?
      - How is Black life different “behind the veil” than in interaction with White people?
      - Or any topic you choose!
    - The paper can use other course materials, or materials from outside the course, but it can also be a deep meditation on just the book itself.
    - This is not a book report or summary, but rather an analytical engagement with the book’s ideas, with your own thesis statement to organize your argument.
  - OPTION 2: Prepare a *weekly course session* that takes off from your group’s name. Develop required materials—readings, audios, and/or videos—and do an 8- to 10-minute video lecture on the topic. Your course session can either be topical – the Black family, Black religion, Black leisure, Black voting patterns – or it can focus on theory or debates within the Black community. Your group’s name must be included in, and illustrate, represent, motivate, or historicize your materials and lecture in some way.

**OFFICE HOURS:**

Professor Pattillo’s office hours are Mondays from 4 to 5:30pm on Zoom at <https://northwestern.zoom.us/my/marypattillo>. Sign up under the AFAM 215 Office Hours appointment slots at <http://bit.ly/officehourspattillo>. Sign up for up to two 15-minute slots depending on how much you want to discuss. If the office hours for AFAM 215 are full, you can sign up under the General Office Hours appointment slots. Please do not use the appointment slots for other courses or groups.

TA Bennie Niles’ office hours are Thursdays from 3 to 5pm on Zoom. Email him at [b-niles4@u.northwestern.edu](mailto:b-niles4@u.northwestern.edu) to make an appointment and get the Zoom link.

**COMMUNICATION AND POLICIES:**

- My primary method of communication is Canvas and email, so be sure to check regularly.
- Late weekly assignments must be accompanied by an explanation, which will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Because the Quotation Blowups are a team submission, hopefully someone on the team can submit it on time. You are responsible for holding your team members accountable, but the professor and TA are available for any issues.
- Late final projects will be downgraded for each day late (e.g., A- to B+, B+ to B, etc.) except for in documented cases of illness, family emergency, or other serious unforeseen circumstances. Having other assignments due in other classes is not an unforeseen circumstance.
- Please review information on [academic integrity](#). All forms of academic dishonesty will be immediately reported to the Dean’s Office.
- **ACCESSIBLE NU:** Northwestern University is committed to providing the most accessible learning environment as possible for students with disabilities. Should you anticipate or experience disability-related barriers in the academic setting, please contact AccessibleNU to move forward with the university’s established accommodation process ([accessiblenu@northwestern.edu](mailto:accessiblenu@northwestern.edu); 847-467-5530). If you already have established accommodations with AccessibleNU, please let me know as soon as possible, preferably within the first two weeks of the term, so we can work together to implement your disability accommodations. Disability information, including academic accommodations as part of a student’s educational record, is confidential under FERPA regulations.
- [NUHelp](#) is a one-stop link for various resources at Northwestern—academic, social, health, etc.

**COURSE SCHEDULE:****Week 1: Course Intro: Blackness and Life**

Course Component	Details
Lecture	Wednesday, September 16, 4:20 to 5:40pm Central Time. SYNCHRONOUS
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enobong Hannah Branch et al. “Crafting the Racial Frame: Blackness and the Myth of the Monolith” (on Canvas)</li> </ul>
Discussion	None
Assignment	None

## Week 2: Concepts and Theories

Course Component	Details
Lecture	ASYNCHRONOUS ON CANVAS
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tennille Allen and Antonia Randolph, “Listening for the Interior in Hip-Hop and R&amp;B Music,” (on Canvas)</li> <li>W.E.B. Du Bois, “Of Our Spiritual Striving” at <a href="https://www.gutenberg.org/files/408/408-h/408-h.htm#chap01">https://www.gutenberg.org/files/408/408-h/408-h.htm#chap01</a></li> <li>Kimberlé Crenshaw, “The Urgency of Intersectionality,” <a href="https://www.ted.com/talks/kimberle_crenshaw_the_urgency_of_intersectionality">https://www.ted.com/talks/kimberle_crenshaw_the_urgency_of_intersectionality</a></li> <li>Shana Redmond, “Diaspora,” in <i>Keywords for African American Studies</i>, <a href="https://keywords.nyupress.org/african-american-studies/essay/diaspora/">https://keywords.nyupress.org/african-american-studies/essay/diaspora/</a></li> </ul>
Discussion	SYNCHRONOUS Wednesday, 9/23 4:20 to 5:40pm
Assignment	Quotation Blowup due Thursday, 9/24 by 11:59pm on CANVAS

## Week 3: Families

Course Component	Details
Lecture	ASYNCHRONOUS ON CANVAS
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Patrisse Khan-Cullors &amp; asha bandele, <i>When They Call You a Terrorist</i>, Intro and Chapters 1-3</li> <li>“Why is it so hard for some black folk to say I love you?” <a href="http://www.thestoop.org/home/2017/7/26/episode-2-why-is-it-so-hard-for-black-folks-to-say-i-love-you">http://www.thestoop.org/home/2017/7/26/episode-2-why-is-it-so-hard-for-black-folks-to-say-i-love-you</a></li> <li>Mignon Moore, “Two sides of the same coin: Revising analyses of lesbian sexuality and family formation through the study of Black women,” (on Canvas)</li> <li>“How to Raise a Black Son in America,” <a href="https://www.ted.com/talks/clint_smith_how_to_raise_a_black_son_in_a_merica?language=en">https://www.ted.com/talks/clint_smith_how_to_raise_a_black_son_in_a_merica?language=en</a></li> </ul>
Discussion	SYNCHRONOUS Wednesday, 9/30, 4:20 to 5:40pm
Assignment	Quotation Blowup due Thursday, 10/1 by 11:59pm on CANVAS

## Week 4: Places

Course Component	Details
Lecture	ASYNCHRONOUS ON CANVAS
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>When They Call You a Terrorist</i>, Chapters 4-7</li> <li>Marcus Hunter and Zandria Robinson, “Making Negrotown” (on Canvas)</li> <li>“This Is a Black Neighborhood. You Aren't Black.” <a href="https://www.npr.org/podcasts/555383579/there-goes-the-neighborhood">https://www.npr.org/podcasts/555383579/there-goes-the-neighborhood</a></li> <li>The Reason #BlackTwitter Exists (And Is Totally Awesome), <a href="https://www.pbs.org/video/the-reason-blacktwitter-exists-and-is-totally-awesome-wq7yae/">https://www.pbs.org/video/the-reason-blacktwitter-exists-and-is-totally-awesome-wq7yae/</a></li> </ul>
Discussion	SYNCHRONOUS Wednesday, 10/7, 4:20 to 5:40pm
Assignment	Quotation Blowup due Thursday, 10/8 by 11:59pm on CANVAS

## Week 5: Schools

Course Component	Details
Lecture	ASYNCHRONOUS ON CANVAS
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools,” (on Canvas in Course Reserves or through NU Libraries)</li> <li>• Charles Payne, “Sympathy, Knowledge, and Truth: Teaching Black Children” (on Canvas)</li> <li>• Derrick Bell. “Bell, J., dissenting,” in <i>What Brown vs. Board of Education Should Have Said</i> (on Canvas)</li> </ul>
Discussion	SYNCHRONOUS Wednesday, 10/14, 4:20 to 5:40pm
Assignment	Quotation Blowup due Thursday, 10/15 by 11:59pm on CANVAS

## Week 6: Covid-19

Course Component	Details
Lecture	ASYNCHRONOUS ON CANVAS
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Why Is the Pandemic Killing So Many Black Americans?”, <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/20/podcasts/the-daily/black-death-rate-coronavirus.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/20/podcasts/the-daily/black-death-rate-coronavirus.html</a>?</li> <li>• Rashawn Ray, “Why are Blacks dying at higher rates from COVID-19?” <a href="https://www.brookings.edu/blog/fixgov/2020/04/09/why-are-blacks-dying-at-higher-rates-from-covid-19/">https://www.brookings.edu/blog/fixgov/2020/04/09/why-are-blacks-dying-at-higher-rates-from-covid-19/</a></li> <li>• Alicia Garza, “We Asked 30,000 Black Americans What They Need to Survive. Here’s What They Said,” <a href="https://time.com/5828803/black-americans-coronavirus-needs/">https://time.com/5828803/black-americans-coronavirus-needs/</a></li> <li>• Micalah Webster, “Resources for Black Healing,” <a href="https://uncw.edu/counseling/documents/resources-for-black-healing_updated_6_1_2020.pdf">https://uncw.edu/counseling/documents/resources-for-black-healing_updated_6_1_2020.pdf</a></li> <li>• “3 Long Haired Months: Barbershop Before-and-After,” <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/25/nyregion/nyc-barber-shops-coronavirus.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/25/nyregion/nyc-barber-shops-coronavirus.html</a></li> </ul>
Discussion	SYNCHRONOUS Wednesday, 10/21, 4:20 to 5:40pm
Assignment	Quotation Blowup due Thursday, 10/22 by 11:59pm on CANVAS

## Week 7: Politics

Course Component	Details
Lecture	ASYNCHRONOUS ON CANVAS
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Michael Dawson, “Introduction: The Contours of Black Political Thought,” (on Canvas)</li> <li>• “Can Black Voters Swing The 2020 Election?” <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rwAVG4L5_S8">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rwAVG4L5_S8</a></li> <li>• Barack Obama, “A More Perfect Union,” <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pWe7wTVbLUU">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pWe7wTVbLUU</a></li> <li>• Candace Owens, “Blexit,”</li> </ul>

	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q3_ZdlcfTes">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q3_ZdlcfTes</a>
Discussion	SYNCHRONOUS Wednesday, 10/28, 4:20 to 5:40pm
Assignment	Quotation Blowup due Thursday, 10/29 by 11:59pm on CANVAS

### Week 8: Protest

Course Component	Details
Lecture	ASYNCHRONOUS ON CANVAS
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>When They Call You A Terrorist</i>, Chapters 10-14</li> <li>• Edna Edet, “One Hundred Years of Black Protest Music,” (on Canvas)</li> <li>• “When Black Lives Matter meets Gay Pride” <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NR0kjYB56e8">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NR0kjYB56e8</a></li> <li>• “When Do Black Americans Get Their Human Rights?,” <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c8z231-OIBg">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c8z231-OIBg</a></li> </ul>
Discussion	SYNCHRONOUS Wednesday, 11/4, 4:20 to 5:40pm
Assignment	Quotation Blowup due Thursday, 11/5 by 11:59pm on CANVAS

### Week 9: Blackness Outside the US

Course Component	Details
Lecture	ASYNCHRONOUS ON CANVAS
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Juliet Hooker, “Afro-descendant Struggles for Collective Rights in Latin America: Between Race and Culture” (on Canvas)</li> <li>• Crystal Fleming, “White cruelty or Republican sins? Competing frames of stigma reversal in French commemorations of slavery” (on Canvas)</li> <li>• African responses to the Black Lives Matter protests, <a href="http://www.thestoop.org/home/2020/9/7/ep-41-connecting-black">http://www.thestoop.org/home/2020/9/7/ep-41-connecting-black</a></li> </ul>
Discussion	SYNCHRONOUS Wednesday, 11/11, 4:20 to 5:40pm
Assignment	Quotation Blowup due Thursday, 11/12 by 11:59pm on CANVAS

### Week 10: Class

Course Component	Details
Lecture	ASYNCHRONOUS ON CANVAS
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mary Pattillo, “Negotiating blackness, for richer or for poorer” (on Canvas)</li> <li>• Saida Grundy, ““An Air of Expectancy” Class, Crisis, and the Making of Manhood at a Historically Black College for Men,” (on Canvas)</li> <li>• “I’m black and I’m a member of the 1%,” <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j_m7Fia_v5A">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j_m7Fia_v5A</a></li> <li>• “The Land of Our Fathers, Part 2,” <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/23/podcasts/1619-podcast.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/23/podcasts/1619-podcast.html</a></li> </ul>
Discussion	SYNCHRONOUS Wednesday, 11/18, 4:20 to 5:40pm
Assignment	Quotation Blowup due Thursday, 11/19 by 11:59pm on CANVAS

## Week 11: Course Conclusion

Course Component	Details
Lecture	SYNCHRONOUS Monday, November 23, 4:20 to 5:40pm (Central).
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>When They Call You A Terrorist</i>, Chapters 15-16</li></ul>
Discussion	None
Assignment	None

\*FINAL PROJECT DUE SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6<sup>TH</sup> BY 11:59 ON CANVAS\*

HAPPY WINTER BREAK!