

WRITING ASSIGNMENT on Du Bois (GRADED, worth 15% of final grade)

DUE **TUESDAY**, February 22 [by beginning of class—points taken off if any time after that, as below]

Lateness policy: .2 taken off if turned in by Thursday Feb 24; .7 if Tuesday, March; 1.0 off if 2 weeks late; 1.5 off if 3 weeks or less; etc. (This is on a 4-point scale, the one used by UMB in its grading system.)

Write a 3-4 page essay (800-1200 words) on the following topic, *answering every question within the topic* in the context of an overall coherent essay:

In a famous paragraph of his essay, “Of Our Spiritual Strivings,” in his Souls of Black Folk, Du Bois begins with the following passage:

“The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self.” In this paragraph and the one before it, Du Bois addresses what he sees as the problem of “double consciousness.”

In your essay, I would like you to do all of the following:

(a) Explain what Du Bois means by *double consciousness*, keeping in mind that he might mean more than one thing by it. Be sure to explain, in particular, why he sees this double consciousness as a problem for black Americans (“Negroes”).

(b) In chapter 3, “On Booker T. Washington and Others,” Du Bois criticizes Booker T. Washington and his program for black people; that program was the most influential view of what was good for black people at the period Du Bois wrote (1903). *Briefly* explain Du Bois’s criticisms of Washington.

(c) Discuss how you think Du Bois saw his criticisms of Washington as connected to the problem of double consciousness, and the “solution” to it.

In answering these questions, you may also draw on the discussion in chapter 14: “On the Sorrow Songs;” but this is not necessary.

In your essay, I would very much like you to *use your own words* and to avoid quoting directly from Du Bois. You may feel that Du Bois can express these ideas better than you can, but it is your learning that I am interested in. Unless you can explain his thoughts in your own words, you have not really or fully understood them. One thing you *may* do, however (although I am not encouraging this), is that if you feel you really want to include a particular quote, give the quote (with its page number) but then *explain what this quote is saying*, and how what it is saying fits in with the overall point or explanation you are giving.

I am assuming you will *not* be using other, external sources for this paper besides Du Bois. But if you do, you will need to follow a standard system of reference and bibliography, which I can give you if you let me know you are doing this.