

Black Workers in American Society

FALL 2026

37:575 303

Section 97

Section 98

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This online course will examine the evolving position of Black workers in the U.S. economy: how it has changed at key points throughout history to the present day, and how access to opportunities in the labor market is informed by racial stratification in the larger society.

We will discuss various dimensions of racial labor market stratification (wages, mobility, benefits, poverty, unemployment, and underemployment) to assess Blacks' economic position in the labor market. 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.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES. The student is able to:

Core Curriculum: 21C and SCL

- CCD-1: Analyze the degree to which forms of human differences and stratifications among social groups shape individual and group experiences of, and perspectives on, contemporary issues. Such differences and stratifications may include race, language, religion, ethnicity, country of origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, economic status, abilities or other social distinctions and their intersections.
- SCL-1: Understand different theories about human culture, social identity, economic entities, political systems, and other forms of social organization.
- SCL-2: Employ tools of social scientific reasoning to study particular questions or situations, using appropriate assumptions, methods, evidence, and arguments.

LABOR STUDIES AND EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS DEPARTMENT:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the perspectives, theories and concepts in the field of labor and employment relations. (Goal 1).
- Apply those concepts, and substantive institutional knowledge, to understanding contemporary developments related to work. (Goal 2).
- Analyze the degree to which forms of human difference shape a person's experience of work. (Goal 6)

SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT AND LABOR RELATIONS:

- Demonstrate an understanding of relevant theories and apply them given the background context of a work situation. (Goal IV)
- Evaluate the context of workplace issues, public policies, and management decisions (Goal V).

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Analyze the degree to which forms of human difference shape a person's experiences of and perspectives on the world. In this class we will explore 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.

Analyze issues of social justice across local and global contexts. You will 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.

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

Through forum discussion and analysis of readings, we will take apart the author's thesis, arguments and supporting evidence to critically evaluate the claims presented and compare them across other readings/authors drawing linkages and distinctions among different approaches and strategies for building arguments and supporting them.

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 using a structural approach. Through this lens we can view blacks' position in the U.S. economy as part of a racial structure fortified by mechanisms such as institutional discrimination, exclusion, and access. We will explore this idea through multiple media: films, class readings chosen to represent a variety of perspectives, class discussions, and group exercises exploring hypothetical situations designed to bring your own experiences and perspectives into the discussion.

Apply concepts about human and social behavior to 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 a racial wage gap amidst a shrinking education gap, using concepts such as social structure, social closure, hegemony, bias, and homophily.

COURSE DELIVERY

- Course written lectures.
- Research based papers and articles.
- Answer questions regarding the readings.
- Online threaded discussions with other students
- Course videos, and/or listening to audio files.

OFFICE HOURS:

I will hold Zoom Office hours Mondays and/or Thursdays of that week from 730am-800am. Please schedule an appointment with me if you need to discuss something that cannot be handled via email.



COURSE MATERIALS

Kelly, Blair (2023) Black Folk: The Roots of the Black Working Class

Publisher : Liveright (June 13, 2023)

ISBN-10: 1631496557

(available via Amazon)

PDFs (which will be posted on the class Canvas site)

All required readings, videos and assignments are located on the course website within Canvas.

ASSESSMENT OF ONLINE FORUMS AND WEEKLY WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

This course will be offered in an online format using CANVAS as the student learning and course management system. The online course format utilizes four specific teaching methods: lectures, readings, discussions, and critical analysis.

Assignments - All assignments are to be turned in on the due date indicated by Sunday at 11:59 pm.

Late Assignments - All assignments are to be turned in on the due date indicated by midnight EST via Canvas. Unless prior approval has been received by the instructor, points will be deducted for assignments submitted late. You will automatically receive ½ credit. Assignment due date is specifically stated. However, the assignment will remain open for ONE week after the assigned date. Anything submitted after the due date will receive PARTIAL credit. Once the assignment is closed, late submissions are NO LONGER accepted.

Final Project and Final Essay Late Submissions: Unless discussed with me, I WILL NOT accept final project and final essay late submissions. They MUST be submitted by the due date.

Introduction: Please post a 1 minute introduction video to the class and respond to at least one other classmate to receive full credit.

Discussion Forums – Students **Forums** - A forum is an interactive threaded discussion used to discuss course topics. Threaded discussions are also a means for the instructor to identify whether or not a student comprehends required reading and/or video assignments. Forums include instructor-generated questions and suggested topic areas for discussion, and student-to-student interaction.

Reflection Assignments: There will be 3 Reflection assignments that are due the same week as the Discussion Forums. Specific instructions are within the assignment

Interview Project (100 points) For your final project, you will interview an individual about their perspectives and views on regarding their experiences in the workplace. Ideally, the individual should be older than the age of 40. Why this age demographic? Because learning from someone 1-2 generations older than you will provide insight into topics that you may not have yourself. Be thoughtful in your selection process. You are not allowed to interview someone your own age. If you have questions about your selected person, please email me to discuss. The project is broken into multiple parts:

- **Interview Selection (5 points).** You will submit a brief description of the background/reason for your choice of interviewee.

- **References (15 points).** You will submit between 7 and 10 references (theories, articles, texts, class notes, etc.) that you plan on building your interview questions around. These can be from course content.
- **Interview Questions (15 points).** You will provide a list of 15-20 interview questions based on your references in addition to an explanation for how they align.
- **Presentation Draft Peer Review (15 points).** You will share a draft of your final project (a draft of your slides, an outline, or script—something that provides a strong idea of what your final project will look like) and review two of your peers' work.
- **Final Presentation (30 points).** You will have a final presentation due at the end of the semester. It can take a variety of forms. It can be a PowerPoint highlighting your project themes.. I want you to think about how you will take the concepts we discuss during the semester and transform that into an opportunity to teach/educate/share/learn from someone who is about 20-25 years older.
- **Final Reflection (20 points).** There is a final reflection paper based on your presentation due at the end of the semester in which you will respond to specific questions.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Class Sessions and Assignment Due Date Information:

The course begins Tuesday, September 1st, 2026

Mondays are the beginning of each course week. All assignments are due by Sunday at 11:59 pm.. ***A weekly message will be sent at the beginning of the week which will provide instructions for new assignments as well as grading feedback regarding prior assignments, and general course announcements. Students are responsible for the contents of weekly messages.

The faculty and staff at Rutgers are committed to your success. Students who are successful tend to seek out resources that enable them to excel academically, maintain their health and wellness, prepare for future careers, navigate college life and finances, and connect with the RU community. Resources that can help you succeed and connect with the Rutgers community can be found at success.rutgers.edu, and nearly all services and resources that are typically provided in-person are now available remotely.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE:

Rutgers Information Technology

Support Website: <https://it.rutgers.edu/help-support>

Email: help@oit.rutgers.edu

Call 24/7: 833-OIT-HELP or 833-648-4357

INSTRUCTOR'S MESSAGE CHECKING POLICY:

Unless you receive advance notification, your instructor will check for messages daily on most workdays. (This excludes Saturday/Sunday, holidays, and official University breaks.) If a student sends a comment or question, your instructor will try to answer the message within 24 hours.

STUDENTS MESSAGE CHECKING POLICY:

It is the responsibility of the student to check for incoming course related messages within the Inbox tool at least 3 times a week. This is in addition to engaging in forums in the course. Students receive at least 1 message a week. Messages are ALWAYS sent via Canvas. Forgetting or being unable to check your messages is not an excuse.

ASSIGNMENTS BREAKDOWN

Assignment	Points
Introduction	5 points
Discussion #1	5 points
Reflection #1	15 points
Discussion #2	5 points
Essay #1	20 points
Reflection #2	15 points
Discussion #3	5 points
Reflection #3	15 points
Discussion #4	5 points
Reflection #4	15 points
Interview Selection	5 points
Discussion #5	5 points
Interview References	15 points
Discussion #6	5 points
Interview Questions	15 points
Essay #2	20 points
Peer Draft Review	10 points
Final Reflection Essay	20 points
Final Project Submission	30 points
TOTAL	230 points

GRADING

Each assignment is worth a certain number of points as identified in the assignments section of the syllabus. Highest number of points a student can earn is 230. Points accumulate to determine final percentage grade. Information concerning use of one's gradebook and assignment rubrics for each assignment is available in the course shell.

Outstanding	Very Good	Good	
90 – 100% = A	87 – 89% = B+	80–86% = B	
Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Poor	Poor
77 – 79 % = C+	70 – 76% = C	60 – 69% = C	0 – 59% = F

DISCUSSION FORUM GRADING RUBRIC

To receive full credit for the discussion you must do the following:

5 points: Initial post should be at least a paragraph in length and you respond with a paragraph response to

TWO CLASSMATES

2.5 points: You created an initial post and responded to ONE classmate

1 points: You created an initial post and responded to ZERO classmates.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY:

All members of the Rutgers University community are expected to behave in an ethical and moral fashion, respecting the human dignity of all members of the community and resisting behavior that may cause danger or harm to others through violence, theft, or bigotry. All members of the Rutgers University community are expected to adhere to the civil and criminal laws of the local community, state, and nation, and to regulations promulgated by the University. All members of the Rutgers University community are expected to observe established standards of scholarship and academic freedom by respecting the intellectual property of others and by honoring the right of all students to pursue their education in an environment free from harassment and intimidation. Please see the following link below for details regarding the Academic Integrity Policy. Students are expected to refrain from cheating, fabricating information, plagiarizing, inappropriately denying others access to material, and facilitating others in academic dishonesty. <https://nbprovost.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-students>

****Avoid plagiarism or other violations of academic integrity! Your written questions will be submitted to "Turnitin.com" to ensure that your answers are yours alone – not answers from another student, from the web, or another source. Be careful not to "copy" phrases or sentences excessively from the readings. The goal is to put the ideas into your own words!**

Plagiarism is the use of another person's words, ideas, or results without giving that person appropriate credit. To avoid plagiarism, every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks or appropriate indentation and both direct quotation and paraphrasing must be cited properly according to the accepted format for the discipline or as required by the instructor in a course. Some common examples of plagiarism are:

- Copying word for word (i.e. quoting directly) from an oral, printed, or electronic source without proper attribution.
- Paraphrasing without proper attribution, i.e., presenting in one's own words another person's written words or ideas as if they were one's own.
- Submitting a purchased or downloaded term paper or other materials to satisfy a course requirement.
- Incorporating into one's work graphs, drawings, photographs, diagrams, tables, spreadsheets, computer programs, or other non-textual material from other sources without proper attribution.

A Note About AI and Writing in This Course

Use of AI such as ChatGPT is only permitted to help you brainstorm ideas and see examples on writing assignments. All material you submit must be your own. When grading assignments, I will be looking for work that has clearly been written in your own voice AND that thoughtfully engages with the material specific to this course. Failure to follow these guidelines – including recycling work from another course – will result in a significant grade reduction.

TURNITIN FOR PLAGIARISM DETECTION:

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com. For this course Fall 2021, your assignments will be reviewed upon submission by Turnitin and students will get a copy of the report.

MEDIA POLICY:

The recording and transmission of classroom activities and discussions by students or faculty is prohibited without written permission from the class instructor and all students in the class. Class participants must have been informed that audio/video recording or reposting of forum contributions may occur. Recording of lectures or class presentations is solely authorized for the purposes of individual or group study with other students enrolled in the same class. Permission to allow the recording is not a transfer of any copyrights in the recording or rights to ownership of content. The recording may not be reproduced or uploaded to publicly accessible web environments without written permission. You may not share any part of any recording without express written permission by all parties potentially affected by the recording.

Recordings, course materials, forum content, and lecture notes may not be exchanged or distributed for commercial purposes, for compensation, or for any other purpose other than study by students enrolled in the class. Public distribution of such materials may constitute copyright infringement in violation of federal or state law, or University policy. Violation of this policy may subject a student to disciplinary action under the University's Standards of Conduct.

EXCEPTION:

It is not a violation of this policy for a student determined by the Learning Needs and Evaluation Center ("LNEC") to be entitled to educational accommodations, to exercise any rights protected under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, including needed recording or adaptations of classroom lectures or materials for personal research and study. Such recordings of lectures or class presentations are solely authorized for the purposes of individual or group study with other students enrolled in the same class. Permission to allow the recording is not a transfer of any copyrights in the recording or rights to ownership of content. The restrictions on third party web and commercial distribution apply in such cases.

DESTRUCTION OF APPROVED RECORDINGS:

Students must destroy recordings at the end of the semester in which they are enrolled in the class unless they receive the instructor's written permission to retain them or are entitled to retain them as an LNEC-authorized accommodation.

Begin	Title	Type of Assignment	Points
WEEK 1: September 1-6	Introductions. Familiarizing yourself with Canvas	Go over Canvas and the syllabus. Email or post any questions.	5 points
	See: Week 1 Readings, Videos, and Assignments on Canvas Shell	Introductory Post!	

Begin	Title	Type of Assignment	Points
WEEK 2: September 7-13	Kelley (2023) Introduction: Solicitor	Discussion #1 Sunday night @1159pm	5 points
	See: Week 2 Readings, Videos, and Assignments on Canvas Shell	Reflection #1 due Sunday night @1159pm	15 points
WEEK 3: September 14-20	Kelley (2023) Chapter 1: Henry Blacksmith	Current Event Article/Online Activity #1	10 points
	See: Week 3 Readings, Videos, and Assignments on Canvas Shell		5 points
WEEK 4: September 21-27	Kelley (2023) Chapter 2: Sarah at Home	Essay #1 Sunday night @1159pm	50 points
	See: Week 4 Readings, Videos, and Assignments on Canvas Shell		
WEEK 5: September 28- October 4	Kelley (2023) Chapter 3: Resistant Washerwoman	No assignment *Use this time to catch up on any readings or submit any late work from the first 5 weeks*	No assignment *Use this time to catch up on any readings or submit any late work from the first 5 weeks*
WEEK 6: October 5-11	Kelley (2023): Chapter 4: The Jeremiad of the Porter	Discussion #2	10 points
	See: Week 6 Readings, Videos, and Assignments on Canvas Shell	Sunday night @1159pm Reflection #2 due Sunday night @1159pm	20 points
WEEK 7: October 12-18	Kelley (2023): Chapter 5: Minnie and Bruce	Interview Selection assignment	5 points
	See: Week 7 Readings, Videos, and Assignments on Canvas Shell	Discussion #3	5 points
WEEK 8: October 19-25	Kelley (2023): Chapter 6: The Maids of the Revolution	Interview References assignment	15 points
	See: Week 8 Readings, Videos, and Assignments on Canvas Shell	Discussion #4 References	5 points

Begin	Title	Type of Assignment	Points
WEEK 9: October 26- November 1	See: Week 9 Readings, Videos, and Assignments on Canvas Shell	Interview Questions assignment Discussion #5 Questions	15 points 5 points
WEEK 10: November 2-8th	Kelley (2023): Chapter 7 Everything Sufficient for a Good Life	Discussion #6 Reflection #3 due Sunday night @1159pm	5 points 15 points
WEEK 11 November 9-15	Kelley (2023): Conclusion: Brunell See: Week 11 Readings, Videos, and Assignments on Canvas Shell	Essay #2	20 points
WEEK 12 November 16-22	See: Week 12 Readings, Videos, and Assignments on Canvas Shell Work on finalizing your final project	Final Project Submission Due December 6 th 2026 @1159pm Final Reflection Exam Essay due December 10 th 2026 @1159pm	30 points 20 points
WEEK 13 November 23-	THANKSGIVING BREAK	THANKSGIVING BREAK	THANKSGIVING BREAK

Begin	Title	Type of Assignment	Points
November 29th			
WEEK 14 & Week 15: November 30 th - December 10 th	Work on finalizing your final project	Final Project Submission Due December 6 th 2026 @1159pm Final Reflection Exam Essay due December 10 th 2026 @1159pm	Final Project Submission Due December 6 th 2026 @1159pm Final Reflection Exam Essay due December 10 th 2026 @1159pm

Information on Student Wellness Services

Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS) (848) 932-7884

17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901, [Counseling Services – Student HealthLinks to an external site.](#)

- CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.

Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA) (848) 932-1181

3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 [Violence Prevention and Victim AssistanceLinks to an external site.](#)

- The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848-932-1181.

Disability Services (848) 445-6800 [Rutgers Disability Services OfficesLinks to an external site.](#)

Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854

- The Office of Disability Services works with students with a documented disability to determine the eligibility of reasonable accommodations, facilitates and coordinates those accommodations when applicable, and lastly engages with the Rutgers community at large to provide and connect students to appropriate resources.

Research Help

Rutgers University Libraries offer numerous resources to assist students. Librarians can help guide you through research and reference tools. A series of LibGuides prepared by librarians in our research areas are available to get you started:

- Introduction to Rutgers University Libraries (
- Communication Studies (
- Journalism and Media Studies (
- Library and Information Science (

The following guides may also be helpful for you:

- Congressional Research (
- Government Information (
- Law (
- Political Science (

On Campus Tutoring and Writing Help

On campus help:

- **Tutoring:** Rutgers has Learning Centers on each campus where any student can obtain tutoring and other help; for information, check <https://learningcenters.rutgers.edu/Links to an external site.>
- **Writing Help:** Rutgers has a Writing Program where students can obtain help with writing skills and assignments: <http://plangere.rutgers.edu/index.htmlLinks to an external site.>

On campus research and publishing:

- **Undergraduate Research:** There are additional resources for undergraduate research at the Aresty Research Center here: <http://aresty.rutgers.edu/index.htmlLinks to an external site.>
- **Undergraduate Publishing:** There are a few opportunities for getting your work published right here at Rutgers. See Kairos: <https://kairosmagazine.rutgers.edu/ Links to an external site.> and Dialogues@RU: <http://dialogues.rutgers.edu/Links to an external site.>