

ECONOMICS 1015: PROFILES OF BLACK GENIUS

Department of Economics

Spring 2018

Harvard University

Tuesday, Thursday 2:30-4:00

Boylston Hall 110

<https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/40966>

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Course Description

Examines the life and work of African-American geniuses “ both historic and contemporary “ in social justice, academics, the arts, and education with a particular focus on how their life and work affected economic thought. Profiles include: W.E.B. Dubois, David Blackwell, Martin Luther King, Richard Pryor, Geoffrey Canada, John Coltrane, and more. The economic topics that are highlighted include the economics of slavery, identity and social interactions, integration, health, education, and labor markets.

The Goals of the Course are:

- to develop an understanding of the history of racial inequality in the US and how economics, as a discipline, can help shed light on these issues
- to learn about great African-American pioneers in the arts, academics, and social justice
- to enable students to understand empirical and experimental research
- to broaden the set of students who choose Economics as a major

PREREQUISITES:

Social Analysis 10a

Grading and Requirements

There is a large amount of reading in this course (approximately 250 pages a week). It is imperative that students keep up with assignments and attend class regularly. *Anyone who cannot commit to doing the readings or coming to the class meetings should not take this course.* To insure compliance with these requirements, performance in the course will be evaluated as follows:

1. One-third of the grade will derive from a student’s average performance on a series of unannounced “pop quizzes.” Quizzes may occur on any class meeting day, at any time during class. **No make-up quizzes will be given and no excuses for absence will be accepted**, but the lowest quiz grade will be dropped before computing a student’s average.
2. One-third of the grade will be from a midterm exam
3. One-third of the grade will derive from a final exam.

EXPECTED LECTURE SCHEDULE (Subject to Change)

Lecture 1-2: Introduction to Ec 1015 and its style of discourse. Political Incorrectness. Unsafe Spaces. Richard Pryor, Chris Rock, and the Economics of Comedy.

Lecture 3-4: Frederick Douglass, Harriett Tubman, and the Economics of Slavery

Lecture 5: W.E.B. Dubois and the Economics of the Ghetto

Lecture 6: Ralph Bunche, An American Dilemma, Jim Crow, and Black-White Wages

Lecture 7-8: Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, and the Economics of Integration

Lecture 9: Malcolm X and the Economics of Identity

Lecture 10: Richard Wright and the Economics of Crime

Lecture 11-12: Walter Mosely and the Economics of Policing

Lecture 13: David Blackwell and Dynamic Programming Problems (Glenn Loury GL)

Lecture 14-15: Glenn Loury and the Economics of Discrimination

Lecture 16: William Wilson and the Significance of Race

Lecture 17-21: Mary M. Bethune, Lorraine Monroe, and the Economics of Education

Lecture 22: Geoffrey Canada, Neighborhoods, Schools, and the Production of Achievement

Lecture 23: Barack Obama and the Economics of Health Care

Lecture 24: Spirituals, John Coltrane, Miles Davis, and the journey toward “Truth.”

Course Roadmap and Readings

Unit 1: Political Incorrectness

1. *Geniuses: Richard Pryor and Chris Rock*
2. Readings: Becoming Richard Pryor (Saul 2014)
3. Economics:
 1. Self-Censorship in Public Discourse: A Theory of “Political Correctness” and related phenomena (Loury 1994, Rationality and Society)
 2. Parental Incentives and Early Childhood Achievement: Evidence from Chicago Heights (Fryer, Levitt, and List (2015)
 3. The Effects of Education on Crime: Evidence from Prison Inmates, Arrests, and Self-Reports (Lochner and Moretti 2004)

Unit 2: Freedom Fighters

1. *Geniuses: Frederick Douglass and Harriett Tubman*
2. Readings: Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas An American Slave, The Underground Railroad (Colson Whitehead)
3. Economics:
 1. Without Consent or Contract: The Rise and Fall of American Slavery (Fogel 1989)

Unit 3: The “Renaissance”

1. Genius: W.E.B. Dubois
2. Readings: The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study (Dubois 1899)
3. Economics:
 1. Housing Segregation, Negro Employment, and Metropolitan Decentralization (Kain 1968)
 2. Are Ghettos Good or Bad? (Cutler and Glaeser 1997)
 3. The Rise and Decline of the American Ghetto (Cutler and Glaeser 1999)
1. Genius: Ralph Bunche
2. Readings: An American Dilemma (Myrdal 1947), The Strange Career of Jim Crow (Woodward 1955)
3. Economics:
 1. Forty Years of Economic Progress for Blacks (Smith and Welch 1986).
 2. Divergent Paths: Structural Change, Economic Rank, and the Evolution of Black-White Wage Differentials, 1940-2014. (Bayer, P. and K. Charles. *forthcoming*)
 3. Hatred and Profits: Getting Under the Hood of the Ku Klux Klan (Fryer and Levitt 2012)

Unit 4: Civil Rights Pioneers

1. *Geniuses: Martin L. King, Rosa Parks, Thurgood Marshall*
2. Readings: Letter from a Birmingham Jail (King 1963)
3. Economics:
 1. Civil Rights, the War on Poverty, and Black-White Convergence in Infant Mortality in the Rural South and Mississippi (Almond, Chay, and Greenstone 2007).
 2. Geography and Racial Health Disparities (Chandra and Skinner 2004)
 3. From Separate and Unequal to Integrated and Equal? School Desegregation and School Finance in Louisiana (Reber 2010)
 4. Long-run Impacts of School Desegregation & School Quality on Adult Attainments (Johnson 2015)
 5. School Segregation, Educational Attainment, and Crime: Evidence from the End of Busing in Charlotte-Mecklenberg (Billings, et al 2004, Quarterly Journal of Economics)
 6. Is School Segregation Good or Bad? (Echenique, Fryer, Kaufman 2006)
 7. Guess Who’s Been Coming to Dinner? Trends in Interracial Marriage over the 20th Century (Fryer 2007)
 8. The Plight of Mixed Race Kids (Fryer et. al 2012)
1. *Genius: Malcolm X*
2. Readings: The Autobiography of Malcolm X (X and Haley), Soul on Ice (Cleaver)
3. Economics:
 1. Economics and Identity (Akerlof and Kranton 2000)
 2. Causes and Consequences of Black Names (Fryer and Levitt 2004)
 3. Political Economy of Hatred (Glaeser 2005)
 4. The Economics of “Acting White” (Fryer and Torelli 2010)
 5. An Economic Analysis of “Acting White” (Austen-Smith and Fryer 2005)
 6. How Does Peer Pressure Effect Educational Investments (Burstyn and Jensen 2015)

Unit 5: The Novelists

1. *Geniuses: Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin*
2. Readings: Native Son (Wright), Invisible Man (Ellison), The Fire Next Time (Baldwin)
3. Economics:

1. The Economics of Crime (Becker 1968)
2. Individual Perceptions of the Criminal Justice System (Lochner 2007)
3. Market Wages and Youth Crime (Grogger 1998)
4. Using Electoral Cycles to Estimate the Effect of Police on Crime (Levitt 1997)

1. *Genius: Walter Mosley*
2. Readings: Devil in a Blue Dress (Mosley 1990)
3. Economics:
 1. Racial Bias in Motor Vehicle Searches (Knowles, Persico, and Todd 2001)
 2. An Empirical Analysis of Racial Differences in Use of Force (Fryer 2016)
 3. Reconciling Results on Racial Differences in Police Shootings (Fryer 2018)
 4. The Impact of Federal Investigations on Crime and Policing (Devi and Fryer 2018)
 5. Police Brutality and Crime: Coming of Age During the Rodney King Riots (Fryer 2018)
 6. The Effects of Police Violence on Inner City Students (Ang 2018)

Unit 6: The (Social) Scientists

1. *Genius: David Blackwell*
2. Readings: A Tribute to David Blackwell <http://www.ams.org/notices/201107/rtx110700912p.pdf>
3. Economics:
 1. Intergenerational Transfers and the Distribution of Wealth (Loury 1981)
 2. A Dynamic Theory of Racial Income Differences (Loury, 1979, https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Economics/Faculty/Glenn_Loury/louryhomepage/papers/A%20Dynamic%20Theory.pdf)
1. *Genius: Glenn C. Loury*
2. Readings: The Anatomy of Racial Inequality, Glenn Loury's About Face (NYT)
3. Economics:
 1. Racial Disparities in Job Finding and Offered Wages (Fryer et al 2013)
 2. Will Affirmative Action Eliminate Negative Stereotypes (Coate and Loury 1993)
 3. Economics of Discrimination (Becker 1957)
 4. Evidence of Racial Bias
 1. Are Emily and Brendan More Employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A Field Experiment on Labor Market Discrimination (Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004)
 2. Discrimination in a Low-Wage Labor Market: A Field Experiment (Pager et al. 2009)
 3. What Happens Before? A Field Experiment Exploring How Pay and Representation Differently Shape Bias on the Pathway into Organizations (Milkman et al 2015)
 4. Racial Discrimination in the Sharing Economy: Evidence from a Field Experiment (Edelman, et al 2017)
1. *Genius: William J. Wilson*
2. Readings: The Declining Significance of Race: Blacks and Changing American Institutions (Wilson 1978)
3. Economics:
 1. Forty Years of Economic Progress for Blacks (Smith and Welch 1986)
 2. The Role of Pre-Market Factors in the Black-White Wage Gap Neal and Johnson (1996)
 3. Racial Inequality in the 21st Century: The Declining Significance of Discrimination (Fryer 2010)

Unit VII: The Educators

1. *Genius: Mary Macleod Bethune and Lorraine Monroe*
2. Readings: Mary McLeod Bethune: Building a Better World (Thomas, et al 2002), Nothing Impossible (Monroe 1999)
3. Economics:
 1. Testing for Racial Differences in the Mental Ability of Young Children (Fryer 2013)
 2. Understanding the Black-White Test Score Gap in the First Two Years of School (Fryer and Levitt 2004)
 3. Financial Incentives and Student Achievement: Evidence from Randomized Trial (Fryer 2011)
 4. The Pupil Factory: Specialization and the Production of Human Capital (Fryer forthcoming)
 5. Does Competition Among Public Schools Benefit Students and Taxpayers? (Hoxby 2000)
 6. Accountability and Flexibility in Public Schools: Evidence from Boston Charter and Pilot Schools (Abdulkadiroglu, et, al. 2011)
 7. Getting Beneath the Veil of Effective Schools: Evidence from New York City (Dobbie and Fryer 2013)
 8. Injecting Charter School Best Practices into Traditional Public Schools: Evidence from Field Experiments (Fryer 2014)
 9. The Production of Human Capital in Developed Countries: Evidence from 196 Field Experiments (Fryer 2017)

Unit VIII: The Community Organizers

1. *Genius: Geoffrey Canada*
2. Readings: Fist Stick Knife Gun: A Personal History of Violence (Canada 2010)
3. Economics:
 1. Are High Quality Schools Enough to Increase Achievement Among the Poor? Evidence from the Harlem Children's Zone (Dobbie and Fryer 2011)
 2. The Medium-Term Impact of High Achieving Charter Schools (Dobbie and Fryer 2013)
 3. The Effects of Exposure to Better Neighborhoods on Children: New Evidence from the Moving to Opportunity Experiment (Chetty, Hendren, and Katz 2015)
 4. Experimental Analysis of Neighborhood Effects (Liebman, Kling, Katz 2007)
 5. The Impacts of Neighborhoods on Intergenerational Mobility I: Childhood Exposure Effects (Chetty and Hendren forthcoming, QJE)
 6. The Impacts of Neighborhoods on Intergenerational Mobility II: County-Level Estimates (Chetty and Hendren, forthcoming, QJE)
1. *Genius: Barack Obama*
2. Readings: The Audacity of Hope

3. Economics: Health Care literature in Economics.
 1. United States Health Care Reform: Progress to Date and Next Steps (Obama 2016)
 2. The Simple Economics of Health Reform (Cutler 2010)
 3. Major Trends in the U.S. Health Economy Since 1950 (Fuchs 2012)

Unit IX: The Musicians

1. *Geniuses*: John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Duke Ellington
2. Readings: Coltrane: The Story of a Sound
3. Economics: N/A