

## Call for Papers

“W. E. B. Du Bois and Urban Sociology: *The Philadelphia Negro* at 125 Years”

Guest Editors: Freeden Blume Oeur, Tufts University, and  
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The year 2024 marks the 125th anniversary of W. E. B. Du Bois’s landmark book *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study*. Emerging in the nascent years of American sociology and the Progressive Era, and within the context of the social settlement movement, *The Philadelphia Negro* pushed the social sciences beyond armchair theorizing by bridging the empirical methods and conceptual tools of sociology, history, demography, economics, and anthropology. Du Bois’s careful study of the city’s Seventh Ward offered insight into the economic and social conditions of Philadelphia’s larger Black community (what Du Bois called a “city within a city”) and how that community was situated in a metropolis that was industrializing rapidly. On the precipice of a surging Black population in the city in the late 1890s, Du Bois scrutinized a “plexus” of concerns including employment, poverty, crime, voting, and family structure. With the Atlanta University Studies, Du Bois would continue to study these issues systematically in the early 20th century. These issues and their relations remain central to urban studies.

Among *The Philadelphia Negro*’s contributions to urban scholarship were Du Bois’s methodological approach. He leveraged historical context, spatial analysis, and racial comparisons to explain the conditions of Black life in the Seventh Ward and extend explanations to structural conditions, including racial discrimination. His approach centered an asset framing that stresses the “place-making” agency of African Americans and challenged more typical deficit frames still common today. The study also included major empirical contributions by documenting heterogeneity among Black Americans along social class and other lines; how housing insecurity exacerbates racial stratification; and how intergroup conflict and crime were not biological impulses (as proposed by “ecological” theories advanced by the Chicago School) but the result of “open rebellion,” in Du Bois’s words, against discrimination and poor living conditions.

While many of the topics of Du Bois’s writings remain common subjects in urban sociology, the field has new and pressing concerns that invite an empirical and theoretical re-investigation on the continuing significance of *The Philadelphia Negro* in the study of the social worlds of cities. Moreover, recent innovations within Du Boisian scholarship potentially offer new conceptual tools for urban researchers. This special issue therefore seeks manuscripts that make novel empirical, theoretical, and methodological interventions that build on, extend, revise, and contest the essential findings in *The Philadelphia Negro* and its connections to Du Bois’s larger body of writings on communities and the urban. This may include, but is not limited to, these subjects:

- Theoretical engagement with the influence of Du Bois’s work on urban sociology including work that interrogates related and adjacent themes such as racialized modernity, racial capitalism, and imperialism.
- How Du Bois’s criminological analysis of social disharmony challenges standard theories of crime within cities.
- Unexplored historical connections between *The Philadelphia Negro* and other scholarship of the time (such as Ida B. Wells’s *Southern Horrors*) and how their relations shaped theorizing on the urban.
- How more contemporary processes of neighborhood change, including suburbanization and gentrification, have shaped racial restructuring.
- Connecting Du Bois’s writings on cities and rural locations to contemporary topics in urban, suburban, and rural sociology.
- The application of Du Boisian concepts and metaphors (e.g., second sight, the veil, a megascope, The Great Near, (dark)water, and shadows) not commonly considered in urban studies.
- How themes from *The Philadelphia Negro* connect with and emerge in Du Bois’s fiction writing—often overlooked by urban scholars—and their use of creative and fantastical plots and themes as a way of imagining cities as sites of progress, change, crisis, and renewal.
- Extensions of Du Bois’s studies of racial patterns of family, employment, migration, neighborhood conditions, educational attainment, health, wealth, religious life, crime, housing characteristics and politics to understand these and related concerns for urban sociologists today.

*Procedure and Timeline:*

- Extended abstracts of no more than 750 words are due **October 1, 2022**. Authors can submit directly to the guest editors.
- Invitations to submit full papers will be sent by **November 1, 2022**.
- Full papers are due **April 1, 2023**.
  - Authors must submit full papers directly to *City & Community* and follow the journal’s submission guidelines: <https://journals.sagepub.com/author-instructions/CTY>.
  - All papers will be subject to the journal’s standard peer-review process.
- For more information, and to submit an abstract, please contact the guest editors: Freeden Blume Oeur, [freeden.blumeoer@tufts.edu](mailto:freeden.blumeoer@tufts.edu); and Zawadi Rucks-Ahidiana, [zrucks-ahidiana@albany.edu](mailto:zrucks-ahidiana@albany.edu).