

Mapping W.E.B. Du Bois in Philadelphia 1896—Today

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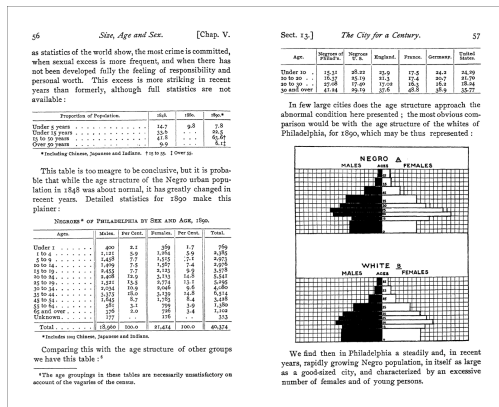
March 20–March 24, 2019

“On the contrary, the great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it in many ways, and history is literally *present* in all that we do. It could scarcely be otherwise, since it is to history that we owe our frames of reference, our identities, and our aspirations.” —James Baldwin, 1965

Philadelphia is like any contemporary city in that it holds a complicated past woven into its streets. However, it is unique in many dimensions. It was once our nation’s capital from 1790 until 1800 during the construction of a new U.S. capital in the District of Columbia. According to **FiveThirtyEight** Philly is simultaneously one of the most diverse and one of the 4th most segregated cities in the nation. In this workshop, you will use graphic design to map and investigate your town based on where its past selves meet the present. As Baldwin has noted, we cannot escape the great force of history. But we might bend it to our own ends.

W. E. B. Du Bois was a prolific author, renowned sociologist, fierce civil rights advocate, co-founder of the NAACP, and a historian of black lives. He was also a pioneer of data visualization. His work as a designer has not been widely known until very recently. Working with ink, gouache, graphite, and photographic prints, Du Bois and his student and alumni collaborators at Atlanta University generated crisp, dynamic, and modern graphics as a form of infographic activism. 63 brightly colored broadsheets were exhibited in Paris and made 20 years before the founding of the Bauhaus. These visualizations offer a prototype of design practices now vital in our contemporary world—of design for social innovation, data visualization in service to social justice, and the decolonization of pedagogy.

In 1896, a young W.E.B. Du Bois accepted his first significant position as a scholar at Penn as an assistant instructor for an annual salary of \$900. Du Bois would spend a year doing groundbreaking first-person sociological research about the demographics of black people and their micro and macro relationships to each other and the city. This text would eventually be published into the seminal *The Philadelphia Negro* that included written text and graphic visualization of data, considered to be one of the first forms of a sociology of its kind.



“*The Philadelphia Negro*,” published by the University of Pennsylvania, 1899

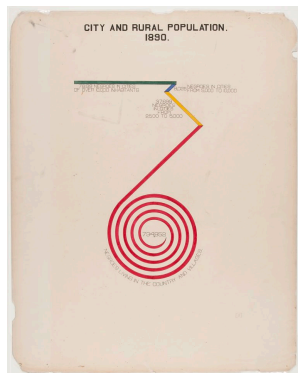


Plate 11 from “*The Georgia Negro*,” Displayed at American Negro Exhibition, Paris 1900

We will be using Du Bois's work in Philly as an entry point to explore your urban surroundings through pieces of design made in two, three, and four dimensions. This workshop will ask you to generate design that questions the legacies of difference and unity of all forms and asks (among others): What makes the familiar? Can we map a city use data? What is our human relationship to an urban context? What is our connection to history as designers? Is data more important than emotion? What do we want to forget? What do we want to remember? Who are we speaking to or might we talk with? What is the role of community within a city? Is a neighborhood a border or a boundary? Can we transcend our apparent differences? What is the purpose of visual identity in relationship to uniqueness? How do you map the unfamiliar?

The answers to these questions in the form of design will be generated individually and in tandem. The only final requirement is to create a cumulative and public documentation and a presentation of some type that includes contributions from the entire team.

Schedule

Wednesday, March 20

The workshop runs from 8:30 am–11:20 pm and resumes from 1:00 pm–6:50 pm
Morning: Introduction to Brief and to Du Bois, his students and their design work, Discussion of Team Structure and Approach, Initial Research, [Dérive](#) of nearby neighborhoods.

Afternoon: First form storming and forays into making, first pin-up/check-in
Evening: Lecture presentation at 7:00 pm in Connolly Auditorium: Denise Crisp
Optional hang in the studio or Caribou Café.
I'll be around late and on-call if needed.

Thursday, March 21

The workshop runs from 8:30 am–11:20 pm and resumes from 1:00 pm–6:50 pm
Morning: Design Explorations, and Reviews

Afternoon: Design Explorations, Design Check-in, Functional Crit

Evening: Workshop leaders in recital: 7:00 pm
Optional hang in the studio or Caribou Café.
I'll be around late and on-call if needed.

Friday, March 22

The workshop runs from 8:30 am–11:20 pm and resumes from 1:00 pm–6:50 pm

Morning: Site Visit with Aslaku Berhanu, Librarian, Charles L. Blockson Afro-Am Collection, Temple University Libraries

[1330 W. Polett Walk](#)

Gather any research before lunch.

Afternoon: Revisit projects and publication vehicles. Finalize Production Plan

Evening: Design Time

Optional hang in the studio or Caribou Café.
I'll be around late and on-call if needed.

Saturday, March 23

The workshop runs from 9:30 am–12:30 pm and resumes from 2:00 pm–8:00 pm

Morning: Design and Production

Afternoon: Same

Evening: Final Touches

Optional hang in the studio or Caribou Café.
I'll be around late and on-call if needed.

Sunday, March 24

9:00–11:00am

Final Installation Review and Documentation.
Adjourn and goodbye.

Required Resources

Please review before and during our time.

[The times and life of W.E.B. Du Bois at Penn](#)

[W. E. B. Du Bois's Data Portraits: Visualizing Black America](#)

[The Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection](#), Paley Library, Temple University

[The Physical Context and Economic Context for Design](#), Meredith Davis

[Image of the City](#), Kevin Lynch