

WEEK 12 INTRODUCTION TO READINGS

W.E.B. DuBois, "The Concept of Race" (1940) and "The Damnation of Women" (1920).

William Edward Burghardt DuBois was born in 1868 in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. He attended Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, then Harvard University. He wrote a Ph.D. thesis on the impact of the Haitian Revolution on the antislavery movement in the United States, and in 1895 became the first African-American to take a doctorate there. As a public figure early in the twentieth century, DuBois advocated full and immediate racial equality. He therefore opposed the ideas of Booker T. Washington (the founding director of the Tuskegee Institute), who argued that African-Americans should not seek political and social equality until after "improving" their own condition and gaining economic independence. In 1909, DuBois co-founded the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). DuBois edited the NAACP magazine, The Crisis, until 1932. DuBois's best-known work is probably The Souls of Black Folk (1903), a collection of essays which eloquently records both the cruelties of white racism and the resistance of African-Americans to it. DuBois died in Ghana in 1963.

WEEK 12 QUESTIONS

W.E.B. DuBois, excerpt from "The Concept of Race" in Dusk of Dawn (1940)

1. Why does DuBois reject scientific accounts of the existence of distinct races?
2. What understanding of racial categories does DuBois draw from recounting his family history?

**W.E.B. DuBois, "The Damnation of Women," in Darkwater
(1920)**

3. What does DuBois mean by "damnation of women"?
4. How has this "damnation" affected African-American women in particular?
5. How have African-American women responded to this, according to DuBois?