

**SOC 314 Assignment 3**  
**Race and Sociological Theory / *Get Out* by Jordan Peele**

Length Recommendation: 750-1,000 words to achieve sufficient depth, happy to read longer work

Due: Monday, November 23, 2020 (to [mtramontano@jjay.cuny.edu](mailto:mtramontano@jjay.cuny.edu))

*Get Out* is a horror film that, according to sociologist Jonathan Wynn, is also a “biting social commentary that [keeps the] sociological imagination on high alert.”

Wynn suggests, “horror films always have some kind of social commentary. *Rosemary’s Baby*, for example, is a classic horror film that examines the politics around women’s’ bodies. *The Stepford Wives* is about suburban conformity. *They Live* is a 1980s film about how capitalistic media and consumption lull people into passive, uncritical automatons. (The list can go on, back through *Night of the Living Dead* to *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*.)” As such, it provides an excellent media representation to analyze using our course material on race and sociological theory.

**Answer the following questions in outline form using the letters and numbers below:**

**1. Employing WEB DuBois’ theoretical concepts from *The Souls of Black Folk*:**

Many commentators have suggested that Peele’s Coagula cult is a literal and extreme interpretation of WEB DuBois’ concept *double consciousness*. In *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), DuBois wrote African Americans are “born with a veil, and gifted with **second sight** in this American world – a world which yields him no self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this **double consciousness**, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness – an American, a Negro (sic); two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps I from being torn asunder” (p. 5).

Apply DuBois’s theoretical concepts of the color line and double consciousness to *Get Out*.

- a) Describe the **color line** in *Get Out* before anything gets “scary.” What is the evidence that there is a “preexisting social and cultural structure” that separates Chris and other African American characters from the Armitages and their friends? You can include examples of symbols, microaggression, and/or overt behavior. What

is the evidence of the **color line** as an “*internalized attitude*” in Chris, Rod, or the police officers of color?

b) How does Chris’s difficulty relating to and experience of mistreatment by the Armitages and their friends help us better understand what DuBois refers to as **the veil**?

**c) Double Consciousness**

- What are two specific examples from *Get Out* that help us to understand what DuBois means by the **double consciousness**?
- In his 2016 acceptance [speech](#) for the Black Entertainment Television Humanitarian Award, Actor Jesse Williams said, “*We’ve been floating this country on credit for centuries, yo. And we’re done watching and waiting while this invention called whiteness uses and abuses us, burying black people out of sight and out of mind while extracting our culture, our dollars, our entertainment like oil, black gold. Ghettoizing and demeaning our creations, then stealing them, gentrifying our genius, and then trying us on like costumes before discarding our bodies like rinds of strange fruit. The thing is though, that just because we’re magic doesn’t mean we’re not real.*” Explain how the film evidences the assertion made in this quote. In Dubois’ terms, how does Peele demonstrate what the **double consciousness** would be in the hands of dominant white culture?

d) DuBois believes the soul of the black artist has an important message for the world and considers the “**second sight**” African Americans have (because they can understand both what it is to be black and white) as a strength that can bring about something new and greater. How are Chris’s eyes and the fact that he is a photographer a commentary on the camera’s ability to reveal racism in general and police brutality in particular in the age of social media?

**2. Critical Race Theory and Racial Formation**

- a) What is **one concept** from Critical Race Theory **or** Racial Formation that helps you to analyze the social commentary on race in *Get Out*, that goes beyond Dubois’ foundational theorizing from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century?

**3. Your Opinion and Experience**

- a) What is your opinion about this film overall?
- b) How does watching a horror film with fictional and exaggerated processes help you to better understand concepts from Dubois, Critical Race Theory, and/or Racial Formation?