

SOCI 254.10
EXPERIENCING SOCIAL CLASS
INSTRUCTOR: DR P CORMACK
FALL, 2020 (ONLINE)

OFFICE HOURS: 11:15-1:00 (Monday – Friday) by appointment (Teams or Collaborate)
EMAIL: pcormack@stfx.ca

“Mommy, I ain’t eating Kraft Dinner again today. We ate it all last week.”
(from Rock, et. al.)

“This is not a trailer park! I know what they mean by ‘trailer park,’ but other people cannot make the distinction, okay? This has rules and regulations, this has restrictions, okay?”
(from Kusenbach)

“I dislike welfare, it is degrading . . . Surely we are entitled to live in dignity.”
(from Calnitsky)

“I don’t care what it costs and I know it costs a lot. I want her to go up there and be able to meet anyone on the street or in meetings...Sometimes I’d get tied up in my words... you get pushed around and other people get their say.. you get screwed.”
(from Corbett)

“Jean came up to Nancy, a working class woman, and said, ‘We wear the same size shoe, right?’ and gave her the shoes off of her feet to try on.”
(from Yodanis)

“I always let them fear me... Because you got an education under you, you gonna push me around. I’ll throw you out of this house bodily.”
(from Sennett and Cobb)

This course explores social class as *experienced* by individuals and communities in terms of exclusion, competition, and moral judgment. Social class is, as Sennett and Cobb classically stated, a “hidden injury” for many, with implications for life chances and choices, while for others it is a taken-for-granted privilege. Social class will be discussed as reproduced and challenged – but also made invisible – through the course of one’s life. Students will consider childhood and university life, especially as organized around social class. This course will provide those students who plan to work in fields that involve marginalized people an opportunity to think about social class positioning, ideologies, and policies in a critical way.

Course learning objectives

- learn and apply classical and contemporary theories of class to everyday life
- examine social class as experienced by people
- approach social class as structural rather than individual
- look at social institutions as reproducing class inequality
- study cases of social class exclusion/advantage
- locate gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, etc in terms of social class
- apply what we have studied to your own situational observations (e.g. workplaces, classrooms, neighbourhoods, leisure, volunteer work)

Evaluation

Study questions (20 readings) = 20 points

Forum Discussions (20 readings) = 20 points

Midterm exam (Oct 14) = 20 points

Final exam = 40 points (optional)

- All study questions for the week are due before the beginning of each lecture (see dates below). No late submissions will be accepted. Moodle will close as class begins.
- All forum discussions close Friday 4 pm of each week – forum discussions may be written after the lecture. Forum discussions will be graded for knowledge of reading, application of concepts from reading, engagement with other posts in the same forum, originality/creativity of examples. Students should post only ONE paragraph (about 50 words) for each reading. The later you post, the more you will be expected to respond to the posts ahead of yours. If you miss a forum post deadline, make it up in the quality of subsequent postings.
- Bonus forum (5 points) – see moodle for details.
- The final exam is optional. You will know your standing grade from your study questions, forum, and midterm. If you are happy with that grade, you need not write the final exam. If you do write the final exam, your grade will not be lowered (no risk).
- *Exams containing any materials directly from the internet will be given a grade of zero.*
- ALL DEADLINE CUT OFFS ARE IN LOCAL NOVA SCOTIA TIME (ATLANTIC DAYLIGHT TIME)

Reading Schedule

Sept 16: Marx, M. and F. Engels. “The Manifesto of the Communist Party”, Chapter 1. (1847)

Sept 21: Weber, M. “Class, Status, Party” (1922 - posthumous)

Sept 23: Gladwell, M. “The Matthew Effect” (2011) and Gans, H. G. “Race as Class” (2005)

Sept 28: Rist, R. "Student Social Class and Teacher Expectations: The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy in Ghetto Education" (1970)

Sept 30: Anyon, J. "Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work" (1980)

Oct 5: Chambliss, W. "The Saints and the Roughnecks" (1973) and Armstrong, E. et al "Good Girls: Gender, Social Class, and Slut Discourse on Campus" (2014)

Oct 7: Sennett, R. and J. Cobb. "Some Hidden Injuries of Class" (1972)

OCTOBER 12 – NO CLASSES, THANKSGIVING

OCT 14: MIDTERM EXAM

Oct 19: Goffman, E. "Symbols of Class Status" (1951)

Oct 21: Kusenbach, M. "Salvaging Decency: Mobile Home Residents' Strategies of Managing the Stigma of 'Trailer' Living" (2009)

Oct 26: Hochschild, A. "I Spent Five Years with some of Trump's Biggest Fans" (2016)

Oct 28: Calnitsky, D. " 'More Normal than Welfare': The Mincome Experiment, Stigma, and Community Experience" (2016)

Nov 2: Veblen, T. "Conspicuous Consumption" (1899)

Nov 4: Yodanis, C. A. "Place in Town: Doing Class in a Coffee Shop" (2006)

Nov 9: Rock, M, et. al. "Discomforting Comfort Foods: stirring the pot on Kraft Dinner® and social inequality in Canada"(2009)

NOV 11- NO CLASSES – REMEMBRANCE DAY

Nov 16: Bourdieu, P. "The Forms of Capital" (1986)

Nov 18: Lawler, S. "Disgusted subjects: The making of middle-class identities" (2005)

Nov 23: Lehmann, W. "Becoming Middle Class: How Working-Class University Students Draw and Transgress Moral Class Boundaries" (2009)

Nov 25: Corbett, M. "'I'm going to make sure I'm ready before I leave': The complexity of educational and mobility decision-making in a Canadian coastal community" (2013)

Nov 30: Horsman, M and P. Cormack. "A Meaningful Meaninglessness: Canadian University 'hook-up' and 'party' culture as gendered and class-based privilege" (2016)

Dec 2: Review for Exam

FINAL EXAM - TBA