

Social Class as Lived Experience (SOC:254)

Instructor: Dr. P. Cormack

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Office Hours: Monday: 10:00-12:00; Tuesday: 12:30-1:30; Wednesday: 12:30-1:30;
Friday: 10:15-12:15.

*"I'm not that rich, that's the thing. My mom won't, she won't get me Gucci sunglasses."
(from Stubber)*

*"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)*

*"Tim Hortons is more middle-class, low-class, a lot of working-class guys. Especially my
Tim Hortons, there's a lot of construction workers – I can't see them ordering a half-
caf, light frappé whatever – they want their 'double double'. "
(from Bookman)*

*"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)*

This course seeks to introduce 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 changes 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, 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:

Discussion/participation (20 pts) (20 readings x 1 point each) – TYPED/DISCUSSED

Midterm exam (25 points – **October 16th**)

Written Assignment – posted on moodle (25 points – **Nov 29th**)

Final exam (30 points – date TBA)

Discussion/participation points: Your discussion point will begin with you typing one sentence that you think is essential from the reading(s) assigned for the day. Working from the quote, you will explain what the reading tells us about social class as a lived experience.

Each discussion point should be about 100 words in length and handed to me at the BEGINNING of class. I will use them to initiate discussion and they will be graded as a whole at the end of the course. Be prepared to be called upon to explain your discussion point.

You are required only to submit 20 discussion points, but I highly recommend that you write discussion points for those readings marked below with an asterisk (*). They will be essential to your essay and your exams.

Class activity: As this is a relatively large class, we will organize ourselves into small working groups. Please sit with your group each class and spend the first few minutes discussing the assigned reading together.

Required Reading: Canadian Scholars Press kit (SOC254, Cormack)

Schedule

Classic Statements (Sept 11, 13)

Marx, M. and F. Engels. The Communist Manifesto, Chapter 1 *

Weber, M. "Class, Status, Party". *

Myth of meritocracy and Self-Fulfilling (Sept 18,20)

Gladwell, M. 2011. "The Mathew Effect." Outliers.

Rist, Ray. 1970. "Student Social Class and Teacher Expectations: The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy in Ghetto Education." 1970. Harvard Educational Review 40 (3): 411-451.

Gans, H. G. Race as Class. 2005. Contexts. 4(4):17-21.

Social Class and Childhood (Sept 25, 27)

Anyon, Jean. Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work. Journal of Education, Vol. 162, no. 1, Fall 1980.

Chambliss, W. 1973. "The Saints and the Roughnecks." Society 11(1): 24-31.

Sennett, R. and J. Cobb. 1972. "Some Hidden Injuries of Class" from Hidden Injuries of Class.

Goffman, Status and Stigma (Oct 2-11)

Goffman, E. 1951. "Symbols of Class Status," British Journal of Sociology 11 (1951): 294-304. *

Kusenbach, M. 2009. "Salvaging Decency: Mobile Home Residents' Strategies of Managing the Stigma of 'Trailer' Living." Qualitative Sociology 32(4):399-428.

Calnitsky, D. 2016. " 'More Normal than Welfare' : The Mincome Experiment, Stigma, and Community Experience". Canadian Review of Sociology 53(1): 26-71.

Hochchild, A. 2016. "I Spent Five Years with some of Trump's Biggest Fans...." Mother Jones, Sept/Oct Issue.

OCTOBER 16 – MIDTERM EXAM

Veblen, Consumption, and Status (Oct 18, 23)

Veblen, T. 1899. “Conspicuous Consumption” from Theory of the Leisure Class. *

Yodanis, C. A. 2006. “Place in Town: Doing Class in a Coffee Shop.” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*. 35(3):341-366.

Rock, M, et. al 2009. “Discomforting comfort foods: stirring the pot on Kraft Dinner® and social inequality in Canada”. *Agriculture and Human Values* 26:167–176.

Bourdieu: Social and Cultural Capital (Oct 25, 30)

Bourdieu, P. 1986. *The Forms of Capital*. *

Lawler, S. “Disgusted subjects: the making of middle-class identities. *Sociological Review*, 2005.

Bookman, S. 2013. “Coffee brands, class and culture in a Canadian city.” *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 16(4): 405-423.

Social Class in Nova Scotia (Nov 1 - 15)

Verberg, N. and C.G. Davis. 2011. “Counter-Memory Activism in the Aftermath of Tragedy: A Case Study of the Westray Families Group.” *Canadian Review of Sociology*. 48 (1):23-45.

(Video: CBC, The Fifth Estate, 1992, “The Last Shift”)

Corbett, M. 2013. “‘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.” *Journal of Rural Studies* 32:275-282.

Horgan, M. and Liinamaa, S. 2017. “The social quarantining of migrant labour: everyday effects of temporary foreign worker regulation in Canada.” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. 43(5):713-730.

(Video: NFB films, Four Feet Up; The Ballad of South Mountain)

University Life (Nov. 20 - 27)

Stuber, J.M. Talk of Class. 2006. The Discursive Repertoires of White Working- and Upper- Middle-Class College Students. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*. 35(3):285-318.

Lehmann, W. 2009. "Becoming Middle Class: How Working-Class University Students Draw and Transgress Moral Class Boundaries". *Sociology* 43(4):631-647.

Nenga, S.K. 2011. Volunteering to Give up Privilege? How Affluent Youth Volunteers Respond to Class Privilege. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 40(3) 263–289.

Horsman, M and P. Cormack. 2016. "A Meaningful Meaninglessness: Canadian University 'hook-up' and 'party' culture as gendered and class-based privilege." *Gender & Education*.

Armstrong, E. et al "Good Girls: Gender, Social Class, and Slut Discourse on Campus", *Social Psychology Quarterly* 2014 77:100.

REVIEW – NOV 29 (ESSAY DUE)

FINAL EXAM - TBA