

Social Class as Lived Experience (SOC:254)

Instructor: Dr. P. Cormack (Fall, 2022)

Office: 605 Nicholson Tower [Office Hours:](#) Tues, 9:15-11:00; Wed, 11:15-2:00; Fri, 10:15-12:00.

Email: pcormack@stfx.ca

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

(from Stuber)

"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 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, 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:

- Reading quizzes* on moodle (1 x 20 = 20 points)
- Midterm exam** (20 points); OCT 14th
- Essay – see moodle for essay assignment; submit to moodle (20 points); DUE DEC 6th.
- Final exam (40 points); date TBA

*All moodle quizzes are open as soon as this course begins. You will be able to do them anytime up until the beginning of the class in which the assigned reading is due, at which point moodle will close for that particular quiz.

** Your midterm is worth 20 points (4 questions x 5 points each). Each of your answers should be about 75 words in length. Answers over 85 words will be given a grade of zero. This exam is

to be written in our classroom and submitted to moodle for grading. Be sure to prepare your answers as more or less complete in order to finish the exam in 75 minutes.

Students may drop a course, online in Banner, on or before the relevant deadline. See the calendar of events in the StFX Academic Calendar for the drop-date.

Required Reading: moodle

Schedule

Classic Statements

Sept 9/13: Marx, K. and F. Engels. "The Communist Manifesto", Chapter 1, p.1-8 (1847) - QUIZ 1

Sept 16: Weber, M. "Class, Status, Party" (1922 - posthumous) – QUIZ 2

Myth of meritocracy and Self-Fulfilling

Sept 20: Gladwell, M. 2011. "The Matthew Effect" (2011)

Gans, H. G. "Race as Class" (2005) – QUIZ 3

Sept 23: Rist, R. "Student Social Class and Teacher Expectations: The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy in Ghetto Education" (1970) – QUIZ 4

Social Class, Childhood and Gender

Sept 27: Anyon, J. "Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work" (1980) – QUIZ 5

Sept 30: Sennett, R. & J. Cobb. "Some Hidden Injuries of Class" (1972) – QUIZ 6

Oct 4: Chambliss, W. "The Saints and the Roughnecks" (1973)

Armstrong, E. et al "Good Girls: Gender, Social Class, and Slut Discourse on Campus"
(2014) – QUIZ 7

Symbols, Status and Stigma

Oct 7: Goffman, E. "Symbols of Class Status" (1951) – QUIZ 8

Oct 11: Kusenbach, M. "Salvaging Decency: Mobile Home Residents' Strategies of Managing the Stigma of 'Trailer' Living" (2009) – QUIZ 9

OCTOBER 14: MIDTERM EXAM

Oct 21: Hochschild, A. "I Spent Five Years with some of Trump's Biggest Fans" (2016)

Calnitsky, D. " 'More Normal than Welfare': The Mincome Experiment, Stigma, and Community Experience" (2016) – QUIZ 10

Consumption and Status

Oct 25: Veblen, T. "Conspicuous Consumption" (1899) – QUIZ 11

Oct 28: Yodanis, C. A. "Place in Town: Doing Class in a Coffee Shop" (2006).

Rock, M, et. al. "Discomforting comfort foods: stirring the pot on Kraft Dinner® and social inequality in Canada" (2009) – QUIZ 12

Social and Cultural Capital

Nov 1: Bourdieu, P. "The Forms of Capital" (1986) – QUIZ 13

Nov 4: Lawler, S. "Disgusted subjects: the making of middle-class identities" (2005)

Bookman, S. "Coffee brands, class and culture in a Canadian city" (2013) – QUIZ 14

BREAK (NOV 7-11)

Social Class in Nova Scotia

Nov 15: Verberg, N. and C.G. Davis. "Counter-Memory Activism in the Aftermath of Tragedy: A Case Study of the Westray Families Group" (2011) – QUIZ 15

Nov. 18: 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) – QUIZ 16

University Life

Nov. 22: Stuber, J.M. "Talk of Class: The Discursive Repertoires of White Working- and Upper-Middle-Class College Students" (2006) – QUIZ 17

Nov 25: Lehmann, W. "Becoming Middle Class: How Working-Class University Students Draw and Transgress Moral Class Boundaries" (2009) – QUIZ 18

Nov 29: Nenga, S.K. "Volunteering to Give up Privilege? How Affluent Youth Volunteers Respond to Class Privilege" (2011) – QUIZ 19

Dec 2: Horsman, M and P. Cormack. "A Meaningful Meaninglessness: Canadian University 'hook-up' and 'party' culture as gendered and class-based privilege" (2016) – QUIZ 20

Dec 6: ESSAY DUE; review for exam