

**Social Class as Lived Experience (SOC:254)**

**Instructor: Dr. P. Cormack**

**Winter, 2020**

**Office: 605 Nicholson Tower**

Office Hours: Monday, 11:00-12:30; Tuesday, 9:30-10:30; Wednesday, 11:30-1:00 ;  
Friday, 10:30-12:30.

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*"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)*

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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:

Discussion/participation (10 pts)

Midterm exam (20 points – February 11)

Written Assignment – posted on/submit to moodle (20 points – March 27)

Final exam (50 points – date TBA)

Discussion/participation points: 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. You are to bring notes to class for the day’s assigned reading and use them to work with your group to answer the questions assigned for that class. You will submit your notes and the group notes for your participation grade. Students who miss more than 5 classes (for whatever reasons) may make up this grade with an extra assignment. Please consult with me if you want to take up this option. Participation will be graded in terms of the quality of individual notes and contribution to the group’s notes.

Required Reading: moodle

## **Schedule**

### **Classic Statements (Week 1: Jan 6 )**

Marx, M. and F. Engels. "The Communist Manifesto", Chapter 1. (1847)

Weber, M. "Class, Status, Party" (1922 - posthumous).

### **Myth of meritocracy and Self-Fulfilling (Week 2: Jan 13 )**

Gladwell, M. 2011. "The Mathew Effect" (2011).

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

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

### **Social Class and Childhood (Week 3: Jan 20)**

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

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

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

### **Symbols, Status and Stigma (Week 4: Jan 27/Week 5: Feb 3 )**

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

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

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

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

**Week 6: MIDTERM EXAM – February 11; Essay workshop – February 14**

**Week 7: BREAK**

### **Veblen, Consumption, and Status (Week 8: Feb 24)**

Veblen, T. "Conspicuous Consumption" (1899).

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).

### **Bourdieu: Social and Cultural Capital (Week 9: March 2 )**

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

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

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

### **Social Class in Nova Scotia (Week 10: March 9/Week 11: March 16)**

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

*(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" (2013).

Horgan, M. and Liinamaa, S. "The social quarantining of migrant labour: everyday effects of temporary foreign worker regulation in Canada" (2017).

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

### **University Life ( Week 12: March 16/Week: 13: March 30)**

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

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

Nenga, S.K. "Volunteering to Give up Privilege? How Affluent Youth Volunteers Respond to Class Privilege" (2011).

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

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

**MARCH 27 – ESSAY DUE**

Week 13 - REVIEW