

Sociology 2031

Gender, Race, and Class Seminar: Classics and Controversies in Class Analysis

Spring Semester 2004: Wednesday 2:00 p.m. to 4:25 p.m. 2R51 Posvar Hall (NOT 2E51 Posvar Hall as announced in the official schedule)

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Course Description

Through readings, discussions, presentations, and written work, participants will engage with classic and critical social science research and theory in the field of class analysis.

The shared readings will include:

- Classical and "neo" Marxist and Weberian models of class analysis,
- Mainstream accounts of "stratification,"
- Feminist challenges to the gendered character of class analysis as a subfield within sociology and political economy,
- Selections from the debate over "cultural Marxism" as right-wing epithet.

Discussions and written work will address the theories, methods, and substantive examples of class analysis and its discontents.

Course Requirements and Grading

Discussion participation

Graduate study means learning to learn from every possible source -- from your readings, your peers, your life experience, your professor, and your research. Participating in seminar discussions is one of the best ways to learn. You are expected to contribute your

questions and insights to the class. The culture of the seminar will, I hope, be a congenial one for self-expression. I will work to maintain such a culture by swiftly countering displays of contempt and by practicing principles of pedagogical equity to the extent possible. I cannot help you learn if you don't participate in discussion, however. Doing excellent written work is not enough to demonstrate adequate performance in graduate school. So show a little backbone, organize yourselves in whatever way you need in order to ensure broad participation in the discussion, and whatever you do, don't suffer in silence. Say anything you can defend against reasoned argument. Treat your colleagues' contributions with respect (which means taking them seriously and challenging them as well as extending basic courtesy).

This should go without saying, but attendance at each seminar meeting is required. More than one absence that is not due to extraordinary circumstances will result in a lowered grade.

In addition to participating in seminar discussions, everyone enrolled in this seminar is expected to complete the following assignments:

Weekly comments (15 percent of final grade)

Before 6:00 pm on the day before the seminar meeting (that is, Tuesday evening), submit to the seminar distribution list a comment of not more than 300 words. Comment succinctly on what you found most interesting, important, puzzling, infuriating, fundamental, etc. about the readings. Students often find it helpful to pick the sentence that best states your purpose, meaning, question, or point of view (often at the end of the comment) and use that as the topic sentence of the final (distributed) draft of your comment. I am much more interested in a focused comment than in a summary of the material, although sometimes a sentence that distills what you think the reading is “really about” can also be very useful. Distributed over email in a timely manner, these abstracts will not only help you organize your response to the readings but will also serve as a guide for discussions. Altogether, these short written assignments contribute ten percent to your final grade. Submit eight abstracts over the course of the term.

Critical reviews and group presentations (50 percent of final grade)

For three sessions of the sessions for which we read an entire book, each student must write a publication-length (750 words) formal review of the text for that week. Most disciplinary journals include examples (I suggest you look over the most recent issue of *Contemporary Sociology*, the journal of reviews for sociology, *American Journal of Sociology*, or *Gender & Society*, the journal of Sociologists for Women in Society). Your review should respond to the text in an evaluative way by placing the work in scholarly context, assessing the methods and findings of the research, and identifying controversies. Your written work will be graded individually.

For most of the sessions, a small group of seminar participants will be responsible for presenting and facilitating discussion of key concepts and controversies from the

readings. The presentations will formally occupy the first hour of the appropriate session, should stimulate discussion, and may of course run longer than 60 minutes. Groups will receive a collective grade provided through evaluation by all seminar participants. The criteria for evaluation are effectiveness of the presentation in conveying important points from the reading and stimulating useful discussion, and apparent equity in preparation among the group members. Presentations may be in any format (although long media presentations, unless produced by the group, are generally discouraged, as are "talking head" recitations of prepared written materials). Summaries or outlines of the readings are NOT acceptable presentations. Presentations should cultivate and reflect creative collective preparation and oral presentation skills.

Final project and presentation (30 percent of final grade)

During the final session of the semester, you will present your final project to the seminar group. Final projects must demonstrate your engagement with the seminar topic. Any of the following are acceptable project ideas:

- A synthetic critical review of at least three sets of readings from the course, at least one of which must not be among those formally reviewed for a presentation.
- A research proposal for a specific empirical project that would be significantly strengthened by your engaging with the materials for the course.
- A concept clarification that draws on multiple sources in the course readings and (if appropriate) beyond.
- An annotated bibliography and ideal-typical questions for a comprehensive examination in class analysis and/or social stratification.
- A website FAQ on class analysis and feminism or cultural studies suitable for undergraduates or non-specialist graduate students.
- Some similarly substantial piece of scholarly work (at least 3000 words) that demonstrates your sustained engagement with the ideas and materials featured in this course.

The final written version of this work -- or the URL for a version of it that you post to the World Wide Web -- is due at the last class session. Depending on enrollment, you will present to the seminar (and possibly a wider audience) either on that occasion or earlier in the term. You must submit a draft of your project text to another seminar participant for comments (see below). This is your opportunity to present your own work in a supportive-yet-critical setting. The presentation and written project together count for 30 percent of your grade.

Comments on project drafts and presentations (5 percent of final grade)

Each participant will be responsible for reading, and providing written and oral comments on, the draft project of one fellow participant. This will be your opportunity to provide supportive-yet-critical feedback to your colleagues at a crucial stage in the development of their projects. You will receive drafts the week of April 7 and must return comments by the following week to allow time for revisions. You may also serve as

commentator on final presentations. Hand in your colleague's comments with the final version of your own paper. These comments count toward five percent of your grade.

I am more than happy to work with you to develop your final project or discuss your critical reviews and other written assignments; we will moreover devote seminar time to this endeavor, and to presentation skills.

Grades will be assigned on the following scale:

- A: Truly exceptional and outstanding work
 - B: Solid, acceptable graduate-level work
 - B- or below: Below acceptable level for graduate work
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Readings

All texts should be available at the Book Center or on the Reserve Wall in Sociology, with the exception of the Buchanan, which you can get for \$6 on Amazon OR don't tell me about pirate copies (the book is a nasty screed but sometimes a scholar's gotta do what a scholar's gotta do).

Books

- Harold R. Kerbo SOCIAL STRATIFICATION AND INEQUALITY: CLASS CONFLICT IN HISTORICAL, COMPARATIVE, AND GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE (5th edition)
- Erik Olin Wright (ed.) ALTERNATIVE FOUNDATIONS OF CLASS ANALYSIS (this book is still technically forthcoming – you may download the chapters from EOW's website: <http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/~wright/Found-all.pdf>)
- Dick Houtman CLASS AND POLITICS IN CONTEMPRARY SOCIAL SCIENCE
- Catharine A. MacKinnon TOWARD A FEMINIST THEORY OF THE STATE
- Richard Florida THE RISE OF THE CREATIVE CLASS
- Leslie McCall COMPLEX INEQUALITY
- Evelyn Nakano Glenn UNEQUAL FREEDOM: HOW RACE AND GENDER SHAPED AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP AND LABOR
- Patrick J. Buchanan THE DEATH OF THE WEST

Reader

- W. Lloyd Warner, Marchia Meeker, and Kenneth Eels SOCIAL CLASS IN AMERICA (NY: Harper & Row, 1960): pp. 3-33. Excerpt reprinted in Rhonda F. Levine (ed.), SOCIAL CLASS AND STRATIFICATION: CLASSIC STATEMENTS AND THEORETICAL DEBATES (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998), pp. 60-85.

Kingsley Davis and Wilbert E. Moore, "Some Principles of Stratification" ASR 10 (April 1945): 242-249.

Melvin M. Tumin, "Some Principles of Stratification: A Critical Analysis" ASR 18 (August 1953): 387-394.

Timothy J. Biblarz and Adrian E. Raftery, "The Effects of Family Disruption on Social Mobility" ASR 58 (February 1993): 97-109.

Chapter II of Frederick Engels ORIGINS OF THE FAMILY, PRIVATE PROPERTY, AND THE STATE (New York: International Pubs., 1970). Excerpt reprinted in Miriam Schneir (ed.), FEMINISM: THE ESSENTIAL HISTORICAL WRITINGS (NY: Random House, [1972] 1992), pp. 189-204.

Chapter 2 of Lisa D. Brush GENDER AND GOVERNANCE (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2003), pp. 23-48.

Highly Recommended

David Grusky (ed.) SOCIAL STRATIFICATION: CLASS, RACE, AND GENDER IN SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE (2nd edition). This is a whopping anthology that contains many of the pieces in the reader. It is exorbitantly expensive, otherwise I would have assigned it instead of the reader and Kerbo. If you intend to prepare more formally for a stratification-oriented comprehensive examination, or would like to teach **Wealth and Power**, or need an excellent doorstop that will also contribute to your education, buy this book. Otherwise, for those few excerpts that I couldn't live without, either get it from the library or use the copies I will make available on the Reserve Wall in Sociology. Also, many of the excerpts are from widely-available books or from articles available from sources such as JSTOR. Decide for yourself the cost-convenience trade-offs, but get the material somehow.

Schedule of Classes

- 7 January – Organizational meeting.
- 14 January – Kerbo, *Social Stratification and Inequality*, Chapters 1-3, 14-17. Fischer et al. and Lenski, both in Grusky, *Social Stratification*.
- 21 January – Kerbo, Chapters 5-9. Warner, Meeker, and Eels in Reader. Davis and Moore in Reader (also in Grusky and JSTOR). Tumin in Reader (also in Grusky and JSTOR).
- 28 January – Kerbo, Chapters 12-13. Biblarz and Raftery in Reader. Sorokin; Lipset et al.; Featherman & Hauser; Mare – all in Grusky (and as books or articles).
- 4 February – Wright and Breen Chapters in Wright, *Alternative Foundations*. Selections from Marx and from Weber in Grusky, *Social Stratification*, or Calhoun et al.'s *Classical Sociological Theory*.
- 11 February – Kerbo, *Social Stratification and Inequality*, Chapter 4. Grusky and Weinger Chapters in Wright, *Alternative Foundations*. Read some version of

- Durkheim's *The Division of Labor in Society*, either the excerpt in Grusky or in Calhoun et al. or the whole book if you're a real Durkheim fan. Bourdieu excerpt in Grusky or whatever of *Distinction* you can get through if you have the book.
- 18 February – Houtman, *Class and Politics in Contemporary Social Science*.
 - 25 February – Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class*. Final Project "idea" due.
 - 3 March – Buchanan, *Death of the West*, plus Kellner's essay on Cultural Marxism and Cultural Studies (available at <http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/papers/cultmarx.htm>) and Berkowitz (available at <http://www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?aid=53&printable=1>).
 - 10 March – Spring Break. Wear sunscreen.
 - 17 March – Kerbo, *Social Stratification and Inequality*, Chapters 10-11. Firestone; Hartmann; Reskin – all in Grusky (and available in various other places). Engels, Brush in Reader.
 - 24 March – MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*. Everyone should read Parts I and II. We will divide up the final Part by people's specific interests.
 - 31 March – McCall, *Complex Inequality*.
 - 7 April – Glenn, *Unequal Freedom*, Chapters 1-3. Rough draft of final project due to commentator.
 - 14 April – Glenn, *Unequal Freedom*, Chapters 4-7. Comments must be returned.
 - 21 April – Final Project Presentations. Final Project due.