

CLASS AND CLASS STRUGGLE

Time: MW 4-5:30PM

Location: Seigle Hall 210

Instructor: Matthew Babb

Office: Umrath 220

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Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 1:30pm-3pm, and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Societies are typically divided into *classes*. The upper-class of society tends to be composed of those individuals who enjoy high degrees of wealth and influence and have many opportunities open to them. The middle-class commands relatively less wealth and influence and has far fewer opportunities than the upper class, but nevertheless still enjoy a comfortable situation in society. The lower-class, by contrast, has far less wealth and influence and far fewer opportunities than other classes. In some societies, this division between classes is institutionalized (e.g. caste systems). However, in many societies it arises as something of a by-product of a society's political and economic policies (e.g. capitalism). But in both cases, the division of societies into social classes inevitably leads to conflicts – or *struggles* – between the competing classes over jobs, resources, services, legal rights, and especially political power. Such struggles sometimes lead to an improvement of the situation of members of the middle-class and lower-class. Other times, they merely lead to a furthering of the divisions between classes.

This course will take an interdisciplinary approach to the notion of class struggle, examining it from sociological, historical, political, and ethical perspectives. We will grapple with the fact that factors like one's race often plays a large role in determining one's class, that most "victories" in class struggles are temporary, that the division of societies into classes is often viewed as a "fact of life," and that individuals tend to incorporate their class membership into their personal identities, taking for granted all the benefits and disadvantages that comes said membership.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Critically examine the notions of class and class struggles.
2. Show how the struggles between classes have shaped history, for better or worse, as well as how history has shaped class struggles.
3. Identify the main tools and technique classes use to "win" the struggle.
4. Relate the divisions between classes to questions about justice and fairness, paying special attention to the moral character of class inequalities.
5. Ask whether the persistence of class divisions rules out the possibility of societal unity.
6. And most importantly, relate these topics and questions back to one's own place in society, reflecting on the benefits and drawbacks of the class(es) of which one is a member.

GRADE SCALE

A = 93-100%	B- = 80-83%	D+ = 67-69%
A- = 90-92%	C+ = 77-79%	D = 63-66%
B+ = 87-89%	C = 73-76%	D- = 60-62%
B = 83-87%	C- = 70-72%	F ≤ 59%

GRADING

1. *Attendance and Participation* (worth 20% of course grade)

Attendance will be taken at the end of each class. You are expected to come to class having read the assigned material, ready to discuss and ask relevant questions.

2. *Journals* (worth 20% of course grade)

Students will turn in six “journal entries.” Each entry should be an attempt to (i) summarize the material from a given topic and (ii) reflect on this material by somehow relating it to one’s own life experiences, the experiences of others, or to a broader cultural context. Students do not need to summarize all the material from the given topic; they may select just one part or aspect of the material to discuss and reflect on. Each entry is to be no less than 300 words and no more than 600 words. No less than 1/3 of the entry should be reflection. Journal entries on a given topic are due on the Monday of the week following the last day the topic covered (e.g. an entry on *Expanding on Marx (Topic 3)* would be due Monday, September 18th). Entries are graded as Good (100%), Acceptable (75%), or Not Acceptable (50%).

3. *In-Class Presentation* (worth 25% of course grade)

Students will give a presentation on ONE assigned book chapter or article. Students will present in groups of two (or in some cases three, depending on course enrollment). Presentations are to provide summaries, laying out the chosen work’s topic, claims, assumptions, and methodologies. Presenters will also be responsible for answering questions from fellow students. An excellent presentation will clearly and accurately summarize the chosen work, and do so in a way that helps fellow students better comprehend the material. Students must send me (the instructor) outlines of their presentations at least two days prior to the day of the presentation. It is also highly advised that students meet with me sometime prior to their presentations, so we can make sure everything is in order. Each presentation, not including time spent answering questions, is to be no less than 20 minutes and no more than 40 minutes.

4. *Research Paper Proposal* (worth 10% of course grade)

Students are to submit a research paper proposal by Wednesday, November 20, by the start of class. It is highly advised that students meet with me prior to submitting their proposal. It is also highly advised that students come up with proposals for at least TWO different research papers, in case the first proposal is rejected by me (the instructor). An acceptable proposal will present a thesis and briefly explain the research strategy for supporting that thesis. A proposal will be rejected if it is (i) too broad in scope, (ii) too vague, (iii) on a topic not sufficiently related to the course material, (iv) does not have enough background literature, (v) merely a survey of the literature, or (vi) not suitable for a paper 3000-5000 words in length. Proposals can be either outlines or abstracts. They are to be no more than 1000 words.

5. *Research Paper* (worth 25% of course grade)

Final research papers must be 3000-5000 words, not including marginalia or bibliographies. Papers are due at the time the course’s final exam is scheduled.

6. *Bonus Quizzes* (worth an extra 2% each, added to course grade)

There will be between two and five surprise quizzes. Quizzes will be on the reading for the day the quiz is given. Quizzes will be treated as extra credit, with each having the potential to raise your base grade by 2%. Quizzes will be graded Pass/Fail. A passing quiz will receive the full 2%; failing quizzes receive 0%.

TEXTS

Marx, Karl, *Selected Writings*
W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880*
Serge, Victor, *Year One of the Russian Revolution*
Schneider, Nathan, *Thank You, Anarchy: Notes from the Occupy Apocalypse*
Rawls, John, *Justice as Fairness*
Nozick, Robert, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*

SCHEDULE [[subject to change at Professor's discretion]]

PART I: THE CONCEPTS OF CLASS AND CLASS STRUGGLE

Topic 1: Ancient Conceptions of Class

Monday (8/28): Plato, *Republic*, Book III (Online)
Further Reading: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book I (Online)
The Bhagavad Gita (Easwaran translation; Online), Chs. 1-4

Topic 2: Marx on Class and Class Struggle

Wednesday (8/30): Marx, Karl and Engels, Friedrich, *Communist Manifesto*, Chs. 1-2 (in *Selected Writings* book)
Monday (9/4): NO CLASS (Labor Day Holiday)
Wednesday (9/6): Marx, Karl and Engels, Friedrich, *Communist Manifesto*, Chs. 3-4 (in *Selected Writings* book)
Further Reading: Marx, Karl, *Wage-Labor and Capital* (Online)

Topic 3: Expanding on Marx: Social Status and Race

Monday (9/11): Weber, Max, 'Class, Standing, Party' (Online)
Wednesday (9/13): Du Bois, W. E. B., *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880*, Chs. 1-3
Further Reading: Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880*, Chs. 4-12

PART II: CLASS STRUGGLES THROUGH HISTORY

Topic 4: From Slavery to Poverty

Monday (9/18): Du Bois, W. E. B., *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880*, Ch. 13
Wednesday (9/20): Du Bois, W. E. B., *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880*, Ch. 14
Further Reading: Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880*, Chs. 15-16

Topic 5: The Russian Revolution of 1917

Monday (9/25): Serge, Victor, *Year One of the Russian Revolution*, Ch. 1

Wednesday (9/27): Serge, Victor, *Year One of the Russian Revolution*, Ch. 2-3

Further Reading: Serge, Victor, *Year One of the Russian Revolution*, Chs. 4-11

Topic 6: The Occupy Wall Street Movement

Monday (10/2): Schneider, Nathan, *Thank You, Anarchy*, Part I

Wednesday (10/4): Schneider, Nathan, *Thank You, Anarchy*, Part II

Further Reading: Schneider, Nathan, *Thank You, Anarchy*, Parts III-IV
Bax, Belfort E., *A Short History of the Paris Commune* (Online)

PART III: BASIC TOOLS FOR "VICTORY"

Topic 7: Language and Propaganda

Monday (10/9): Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Genealogy of Morals*, First Essay (Online)

Wednesday (10/11): Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*, Ch. 1 (Online)

Further Reading: Du Bois, W. E. B., *Black Reconstruction in America*, Ch. 17

Topic 8: Protest

Monday (10/16): NO CLASS (Fall Break)

Wednesday (10/18): Martin Luther King, Jr., 'I Have a Dream...' (Online)
Martin Luther King, Jr., 'Nonviolence and Racial Justice' (Online)

Further Reading: Mahatma Gandhi, *Selected Writings* (Duncan ed.), Part I (Online)
Mahatma Gandhi, *Selected Writings* (Duncan ed.), Part II

Topic 9: Revolution and Violence

Monday (10/23): Arendt, Hannah, *On Revolution*, Ch. 2, §§1-4 (Online)

Wednesday (10/25): Malcolm X, *Malcolm X Speaks*, Chs. 3-4 (Online)

Further Reading: Arendt, Hannah, *On Revolution*, Ch. 2, §§5-6
Malcolm X, *Malcolm X Speaks*, Chs. 1-2
Arendt vs. Chomsky, 'The Legitimacy of Violence as a Political Act' (Web address: <https://chomsky.info/19671215/>)

PART IV: CLASSES AND JUSTICE

Topic 10: Rawls on Social Inequality

- Monday (10/30): Rawls, John, *Justice as Fairness*, §§1-11 (Part I)
- Wednesday (11/1): Rawls, John, *Justice as Fairness*, §§12-22 (Part II)
- Monday (11/6): NO CLASS (Professor away at conference)
- Wednesday (11/8): Rawls, John, *Justice as Fairness*, §§23-32 (Part III)
- Further Reading: Rawls, John, *Justice as Fairness*, §§41-53 (Part IV)

Topic 11: Nozick on Personal Liberty

*****Papers Proposals Due Monday, November 20th by 4:00pm*****

- Monday (11/13): Nozick, Robert, *Anarchy, State, Utopia*, Ch. 7, Section I (pp. 149-183)
- Wednesday (11/15): Nozick, Robert, *Anarchy, State, Utopia*, Ch. 7, Section II (pp. 183-228)
- Monday (11/20): Nozick, Robert, *Anarchy, State, Utopia*, Ch. 8 (pp. 232-275)
- Wednesday (11/22): NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Holiday)
- Further Reading: Nozick, Robert, *Anarchy, State, Utopia*, Ch. 10 (pp. 297-334)

PART V: CAN'T WE ALL JUST GET ALONG?

Topic 12: Classless Societies – Feasible? Desirable?

- Monday (11/27): Marx, Karl, *Critique of the Gotha Program* (in Selected Writings book)
- Wednesday (11/29): Rand, Ayn, *Atlas Shrugged*, Ch. 7 (John Galt speech; Online)
- Further Reading: Mao Zedong, 'Beat Back Attacks of Bourgeois Rightists!' (Online)

Topic 13: Can Conflicts be Avoided?

- Monday (12/4): Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Ch. 2 (Online)
- Wednesday (12/6): Haidt, Jonathan, *The Righteous Mind*, Ch. 12 (Online)
- Further Reading: Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Chs. 3-4

Finals Week: 12/14–12/20

*****Final Papers Due Final Exam Day/Time*****

OTHER POLICIES

Late Assignments Policy

Assignments turned in late will receive a 3% reduction in earned grade *for each class day that passes starting from the class day the assignment was due*. So, if the assignment due on Tuesday, October 1st, for example, is turned in by the time of the class on October 3rd, then it will receive a 3% reduction in earned grade. But if it is turned in after the 3rd, but by the 8th, it will receive a 6% reduction. And so on for each class day that passes. Work more than 3 weeks late will not be accepted. Exceptions to this policy may be made in certain cases, such as emergencies.

Classroom Policies

1. Please show up on time. If people are regularly showing up late for the start of class, I may decide to lock the door promptly at the start of class.
2. Use of computers is permitted during class. Cell phones, however, are not.
3. No eating during class. Beverages are permitted.
4. Be respectful of your peers. You're all in this together, so it's best to get along.
5. I reserve the right to call on anyone as I see fit. If I find that few people – or no one – are actively participating, I may choose to randomly call on those not participating, or may do so systematically. This is not to frighten or embarrass anyone, but merely to do my part to help you all get the most out of the course.
6. I also reserve the right to implement additional classroom policies not listed here, at my discretion.

Handouts Policy

On occasion, I will provide handouts outlining the structure and content of what I intend to discuss during a given class meeting. Handouts will only be given to those who attend that meeting. If you miss class, then you've lost the opportunity to receive a copy of the handout. There can be expectations to this rule, but they will be determined on a case-by-case basis and to my discretion. Handouts will not be distributed electronically.

Academic Integrity Policy

My policy is the University's policy, as found here:

<https://wustl.edu/about/compliance-policies/academic-policies/undergraduate-student-academic-integrity-policy/>

If you are unsure about what constitutes a violation of academic integrity, please see me. Any violation of academic integrity standards may result in a grade of 'F' for the course and a referral to Judicial Affairs, so please be very careful about this.

Students with Disabilities

Any student who has registered with the office of Disability Services and Programs (DSP) and who has been identified by DSP as needing specific accommodations will gladly be afforded them. Please see me as soon as possible in the semester to discuss appropriate accommodations.