

Work, Social Class & Culture

CULP 333
School of Foreign Service
Georgetown University

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This course begins in Manchester, England in 1844 and ends in New York City in 1995 and Los Angeles in 2000. In between, we travel to India, Columbia, Egypt, Malaysia, Japan, and France exploring issues of work, social class and culture. It is these three concepts – **work, social class and culture** – and how they are related that this course is primarily about. How does work – (not work in the abstract, but work in the modern period, work under capitalism and more often than not – factory labor) - affect one's social class? And how does the experience of work affect one's sense of self?

Before addressing these questions, however, we must explore the nature of social class. What is social class and how have different authors understood this important and controversial concept? What are the determinants of social class and how does culture fit into this concept? Is culture simply a result of one's social class or does culture, in part, determine social class?

Finally, what is culture's relationship to both work and social class? What do we mean by culture, here? We mean at least two analytically distinct things: First, the culture of work (different work cultures – e.g. the cultures of corporations versus the cultures of firms/factories – different workplace cultures); Secondly, we mean the non-material aspects of social class – aesthetic sensibilities, consumption habits, taste, ideas, language, values, dress, etc ... The question becomes, how does culture relate to both work and social class?

We will explore these questions in different ways. We will begin by closely reading a number of the foundational texts in social theory that deal with issues of social class (e.g. Marx, Engels, Weber, Tonnies) before turning to one particular type of text – **the ethnography** – to further explore concretely different examples of work in various historical and spatial locations– providing a significant comparative and trans-historical dimension to our endeavor. We will also touch upon a number of related topics including gender and work; factory life; power and resistance; inequality; the reproduction of social class; capitalism; wage-labor; capitalism from the perspective of workers; etc...

***Ethnography:** Ethnography is both a method of research as well as a type of text. Ethnography as a research method is most closely associated with the discipline of anthropology. Ethnographies are also monographs (texts) that are, more often than not, based on the method of *participant-observation* – in which the ethnographer (the researcher) produces knowledge and a text by being physically present (e.g. participating and observing the lives/experiences of the people he/she is interested in). As such, ethnographies are usually focused on relatively small groups of people and are based on long-term intensive fieldwork – research – traditionally in one location (although this is changing with “multiple-site ethnography”).

In our case, the ethnographies we will examine will take up workplaces and work processes, factory life, labor (power and resistance), work cultures, the culture of the workplace, etc... Some of the specific work settings will include Manchester, England in the mid-19th century, jute workers in India in the 19th and 20th centuries, textile workers in Columbia (mid-20th century) and Egypt and Los Angeles (contemporary), small workshops in Japan and drug dealing (as work, and the culture that it produces) in New York city (1990s). Therefore, one of the secondary objectives of this course is to develop an understanding of what ethnography is (as a method), how it is done and developing criteria with which to judge more and less successful ethnographies.

Requirements: As a small seminar, this course is primarily about interaction in class. A) As such, seminar participants are expected to come to class *thoroughly prepared and ready to discuss the readings*. B) Additionally, everyone in the seminar will be required to *lead class discussion* at least once during the term. C) Seminar participants are also required to write one-page *reaction papers* to the week’s readings and distribute them via email to all class participants on *Wednesday evening*. (Please note that these are not intended to be summaries of the readings – we have all read the assigned work, some of us more than once! Reaction papers are to contain *your reaction, analysis and reflections* on the week’s readings. Please also note that these are also *not* intended to be polished pieces of publishable writing. For the reaction papers, I am interested in ideas, not beautifully polished prose). D) The final assignment is a ‘review essay’ that deals at greater length with one of the assigned texts in detail, also synthesizing other related material not assigned in class.

Grading: in class participation – 30%; weekly written assignments 20%; final paper 50%.

Books Available for Purchase:

*Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (Penguin Classics).

- * Richard Biernacki, *The Fabrication of Labor: Germany and Britain, 1640-1914* (Studies on the History of Science and Culture , No 22) (Berkeley: UC Press) 1995.
- *Paul E. Willis, *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press), 1977.
- *Leela Fernandes , *Producing Workers: The Politics of Gender, Class, and Culture in the Calcutta Jute Mills* (Critical Histories) (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press)1997.
- *Ann Farnsworth-Alvear; *Dulcinea in the Factory: Myths, Morals, Men, and Women in Columbia's Industrial Experiment, 1905-1960* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press) 2000.
- *Patrick Joyce (Editor), *Class* (Oxford Readers) (Oxford: Oxford University Press) 1995.
- *Philippe Bourgois, *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 1995.
- *Dorinne K. Kondo, *Crafting Selves: Power, Gender, and Discourses of Identity in a Japanese Workplace* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press) 1990.
- * Aihwa Ong, *Spirits of Resistance and Capitalist Discipline (Suny Series in Anthropology of Work)* (Albany: State Univ. of NY Press) 1987.
- *Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Rethinking Working-Class History: Bengal, 1890-1940* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), March 1989.
- * Edna Bonacich, Richard Appelbaum, *Behind the Label: Inequality in the Los Angeles Apparel Industry* (Berkeley: University of California Press), May 2000.

Supplementary:

- * Pierre Bourdieu, Richard Nice(Translator), *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*
- *Greta Foff Paules, *Dishing It Out: Power and Resistance Among Waitresses in a New Jersey Restaurant* (Women in the Political Economy)
- * Rick Delbridge, *Life on the Line in Contemporary Manufacturing: The Workplace Experience of Lean Production and the 'Japanese' Model*

Films:

- **Modern Times* (1936) Charlie Chaplin
- **Metropolis* (1927/1928) Fritz Lang

**Human Resources* (1999) French with English subtitles

**Secrets of Silicon Valley* (2001) Directors: Deborah Kaufman and Alan Snitow

**A Dangerous Business* (2002) Frontline

[see also http://www.djdinstitute.org/f_films.html]

Schedule:

Introduction: Thursday January 9 (syllabus; course overview; requirements; introductions, etc..)

Topic 1: Thursday January 16: Karl Marx & Social Class

*Karl Marx, selections from:

-*Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, vol. 1. (New York: International Publishers) 1967.

[Read: pp. 1-40 (read/skim); 43-56; 76-87; 164-192; 204-221; 222-286; 501-528]
[Skim: pp. 154-163; 305-317; 318-347; 351-475]

(*Capital* is also available online at:
<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/index.htm>)

Read:

*"Preface to the English Edition"

*"Preface and Afterwards" by. K. Marx and F. Engels to the German and French editions.

*'Afterwards to the Second German Edition"

*"Chapter 1: Commodities and Money; Section 1: The Two Factors of a Commodity," pp. 43-56.

*"Section 4: The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret thereof," pp. 76- 87.

*"Chapter VI: The Buying and Selling of Labour Power"

*"Chapter IX: The Rate of Surplus Value"

*"Chapter X: The Working Day"

*"Part VI: Wages"

-*Capital*, vol. 3 (selection on social class)

-*The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (selections on social class)

Recommended:

*Bertell Ollman, "Marx's Use of Class," *The American Journal of Sociology* vol. 73, no. 5, March 1968.

Topic 2: Thursday January 23: Classical & Modern Theories of Social Class

Selections from Patrick Joyce (ed.) *Class* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press) 1995.

*Max Weber, 'Class, Status and Party,' pp. 31-40.

*Ferdinand Toennies, "On Estates and Classes," pp. 40-43.

*Rosemary Crompton, "The Development of the Classical Inheritance," pp. 43-55.

*E.P. Thompson, "The Making of Class," & "Class and Class Struggle," pp. 131-142.

*Pierre Bourdieu, "The Reality of Representation and the Representation of Reality," pp. 99-101.

*Ira Katznelson, "Levels of Class Formation," pp. 142-150.

*Gareth S. Jones, "Class, 'Experience' and Politics," pp. 150-154.

*Joan. W. Scott, "Language, Gender and Working Class History," pp. 154-161.

*Patrick Joyce, "A People and a Class," pp. 161-167.

Recommended:

* P. Bourdieu, "The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups," in *Theory and Society* 14 (1985) pp. 723-744.

*P. Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* [selections].

*Michael Hanagan, "New Perspectives on Class Formation," *Social Science History*, 18:1 (spring 1994), pp. 77-94.

*Adam Przeworski, "Proletariat into a Class: The Process of Class Formation: from Karl Kautsky's *The Class Struggle* to Recent Controversies," *Politics and Society* vol. 7, no. 4 1977, pp. 343-401.

Topic 3: Thursday January 30: Manchester & the first industrial working class

*F. Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England (in 1844)*

Topic 4: Thursday February 6: England & Germany Compared

*R. Biernacki, *The Fabrication of Labor* (selections)

Topic 5: Thursday February 13: India; Textile Workers and Theory

* D. Chakrabarty, *Rethinking Working Class History*

Topic 6: Thursday February 20: India

*Leela Fernandes, *Producing Workers*

Topic 7: Thursday February 27: Columbia

* Ann Farnsworth-Alvear, *Dulcinea in the Factory: Myths, Morals, Men, and Women in Columbia's Industrial Experiment, 1905-1960*

Topic 8: Thursday March 6: Egypt

* Samer Shehata, *Plastic Sandals, Tea and Time: Shop Floor culture and politics in Egypt*

(To be distributed)

Recommended:

*Yasser Alwan, *Scream: Documenting Human Rights* (Cairo: 2000) Embassies of the Netherlands and Switzerland.

Thursday March 13th – Spring Break

Topic 9: Thursday March 20: Los Angeles

E. Bonachirch and R. Appelbaum, *Behind the Label*

Thursday March 27 (No Class – CCAS Symposium)

Topic 10: Thursday April 3: Education & the reproduction of social class

*Paul Willis, *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids get Working Class Jobs*

Topic 11: Thursday April 10: Malaysia

*A. Ong, *Spirits of Resistance*

Thursday April 17 -- Easter Break

Topic 12: Thursday April 24: Japan

D. Kondo, *Crafting Selves*

***Make-up – Final Class**

*Philippe Bourgois, *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio*

* Greta Foff Paules, *Dishing it Out: Power and Resistance Among Waitresses in a New Jersey Restaurant*