

Outline Lecture 10, Sociology 621, October 10, 2011
WHAT IS CLASS?

I. ALTERNATIVE CLASS CONCEPTS: If “class” is the answer, what is the question?

1. Class as *Subjective location*. How do people **classify themselves** in the system of social stratification?
2. Class as *Distributional Location*. How are people **located objectively in distributions** of material inequality?
3. *Class as Empirical Summary of Stratification* To what extent do the different empirical **dimensions of social inequality coincide** in ways which constitute empirically distinguishable groups?
4. *Class as Market-Opportunity structure* What determines the basic **life chances** of individuals in a market society?
5. *Class as the basis for economic conflict* What **forms of conflict** are most systematically linked to the social organization of production?
6. Class as *Historical Variation* How should we characterize and explain the **variations across history** in the social organization of inequalities?
7. *Class and social emancipation* What sorts of transformations are needed to **eliminate economic oppression** and exploitation within capitalist societies?

II. THE CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS OF MARXIST CONCEPT OF CLASS: A Step-by-step guide

Step 1. Relational vs. gradational concepts.

Step 2. What kind of relations constitute “class” relations?

Step 2a. The concept of relations of production

Step 2b. Class relations as a form of production relations

Step 3. Variations in class relations

Step 4. Locations within class relations

Step 5. Micro- and Macro-class analysis

Step 6. The Explanatory Claims: *The fundamental thesis of class analysis*

- What you *have* determines what you *get* and
- What you *have* determines what you *have to do to get what you get*.
- What you *have to do to get what you get* determines *whose interests are opposed to yours as you do what you have to do to get what you get*.

Step 7. Marxist class analysis: the specificity of class mechanisms

Exploitation

Domination

III. CLASS AS A CRITICAL CONCEPT

Within Marxism, the analysis of the effects of class in capitalism is fundamentally from the point of view of the abolition of capitalist class relations.

IV. A REPERTOIRE OF CLASS CONCEPTS

1. *Class structure.*
2. *Class Interests.*
3. *Class formation.*
4. *Class capacities.*
5. *Class practices.*
6. *Class struggle.*
7. *Class consciousness.*