

## **Sociology 929**

# **Alternative Foundations of Class Analysis**

**Fall Semester, 2006**

**Professor Erik Olin Wright**

If “Class” is the answer, what is the question?

The concept of class is one of the most contested concepts within sociology. Sometimes this is just a question of how the *word* class is being used, but behind the alternative uses of the term there often lurks deeper theoretical disagreements about how best to understand the nature and consequences of economic inequality in contemporary societies. This seminar will explore in a systematic and rigorous manner the full range of alternative conceptualizations of class. The focus will be on contemporary approaches, although there will be some attention to classic statements. The course will give students an opportunity both to gain a deeper understanding of the substantive issues around the analysis of class, but also to engage in a very fine-grained manner the problem of carefully defining concepts. Sociologists often take a quite casual attitude towards the problem of concept-formation. While they may worry quite a bit about the theoretical arguments that link concepts together, much less attention is frequently paid to the underlying logic of the abstract definitions of the concepts themselves.

## WRITING REQUIREMENTS

There are two categories of written requirements for the seminar:

### 1. *Weekly reading interrogations*

I strongly believe that writing is central to reading and that students should be in the habit of writing memos interrogating anything they read. These should not be standard “reading notes” summarizing main points in an argument, although summaries may be part of such notes. Rather they should be conversations with the readings in which issues are raised, arguments analyzed, problems discussed. These interrogations will form a substantial basis for the seminar discussions so it is worth taking the task seriously. I have no length specification for these interrogations. It is fine for them to be quite short – say 200 words or so – but longer memos are also OK (within reason – remember: I have to read and comment on all of these each week and everyone else in the class will read them as well). These memos should be emailed to me *by 6 pm on the Monday night* before the seminar meets. I will then read and comment on the interrogations and circulate them to the entire class late Monday night. Everyone should try to read all of these memos before coming to class on Tuesday afternoon. **It is very important that you send me your interrogations by the deadline so that i have time to write comments.**

### 2. *Term papers*

*Objectives.* Term papers in PhD seminars should not primarily be regarded as glorified “homework”; they should be viewed as first drafts of potentially publishable papers. You should mainly be writing in order to communicate to the world, not to simply fill requirements. I thus encourage you very strongly to pick a topic that you really care about and write a paper which (with more work and revisions) could result in a publication.

*Schedule.* In order to give you time to do serious reading and writing for the paper, the last regular meeting of the seminar will be on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving (November 21). You will then have four weeks to complete your papers before the seminar’s mini-conference to be held December 16-17 (see below). Written proposals for term papers should be submitted *no later than October 24, the 8<sup>th</sup> week of class.*

*Collaboration.* Students are free to write collaborative papers. This can consist either of fairly well demarcated parts of a paper written by each participating student or a fully collaborative project.

*Length.* There is no fixed length for the term papers, but the rough expectation is something in the 20-25 page range (5000-7000 words more or less).

*Topics.* Term papers for the seminar can be on any topic linked to the problem of class. Even though our discussions will mainly be theoretical, it is fine for papers to have a much more empirical focus. The papers should be quite self-conscious about the character of the class concepts used, but the paper need not be primarily about the concepts themselves.

Below are some broad suggestions for possible types of term papers:

- Examine some empirical problem in class analysis using either qualitative or quantitative data within one of the approaches to class we have discussed.
- Explore the foundations of some of the approaches to class analysis which we have not covered in the seminar such as the functionalist stratification approaches of the 1950s; the gradational and status-centered class analysis of W. Llyod Warner and others; the Marxian class analyses of French structuralist Marxism (Poulantzas, Balibar, Althusser); Gramsci's approach to class; E.P. Thompson's historicist approach, etc.
- Take one of the broad traditions we have explored and then map out the variations within that "school" or tradition – varieties of Weber-inspired class analysis, varieties of Marx-inspired class analysis, varieties of Bourdieu-inspired class analysis, etc.
- Examine the implications for philosophical/normative discussions of justice and inequality of different views of class analysis.
- Take some interesting piece of empirical/historical scholarship in which class-relevant issues play an important role and explore the implications of alternative conceptualizations of class for the way the case study would be developed. This would need to be a fairly fine-grained analysis, not just a quick gloss. Examples of some studies which might be useful foils for such an analysis would include:

Boltanski, *The making of a class : cadres in French society*

Bernacki, *Fabrication of Labor*

Ehrenreich, *Nickle and Dimed*

Chakrabarty, *Rethinking Working Class History: Bengal 1890-1940.*

Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity*

Willis, *Learning to Labour*

Zussman, *Mechanics of the Middle Class: work and poliics among American Engineers*

Whalley, *The Social Production of Technical Work*

Crawford, *Technical Workers in an Advanced Society: the work, careers and politics of French Engineers*

### MIN-CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS OF TERM PAPERS

At the end of the semester we will have a weekend mini-conference during which the term papers will be presented and discussed. There are roughly 18 students in the seminar. This means that we will need about 12 hours of actual presentation time for all of the papers to be presented and discussed. With breaks, etc., this means that we will need almost two days for the conference: all day Saturday, December 16<sup>th</sup> and part of Sunday the 17<sup>th</sup>. The conference will be held at a University of Wisconsin retreat on the Wisconsin River north of Madison. This mini-conference will take the place of the last three sessions of the seminar which will not meet in order to give students time to write their papers.

I will organize the mini-conference in the form of a standard professional sociological conference: there will be panels, presentations, and discussions. The conference will have the added value of giving participants practice for such events. Each paper will have roughly 20 minute for presentation and 20 minutes or so for discussion.

### SEMINAR SESSIONS

The seminar discussions will revolve, to a significant extent, around the issues raised by the weekly written memos. I will review these memos and distill a core agenda for the seminar each week, which is one reason why it is important for you to get the memos to me by email by 6:00 Monday evenings. Depending upon how things go, I may also ask students to elaborate their memo as an impromptu presentation so you should be prepared to talk about them.

Often in graduate seminars that deal with abstract theoretical matters students are eager to launch into intense debates over the adequacy of various formulations before the details and rationale for the arguments have been really nailed down. For each of the bodies of work we discuss I feel it is very important to spend time at the beginning of each session carefully laying out the arguments in a fine-grained way in order to be sure that we all fully understand the work in question. As an intellectual stance to studying this material, I think it would be good for everyone to play the role of a defender and explicator of each approach we study as well as critic.

One other note on the seminar sessions. Academics (not just students) are often better at talking than listening, yet a good seminar depends as much on everyone listening to each other as it does on making fine speeches. Without good listening, the discussion is not a conversation but a disjointed series of proclamations.

### READINGS

There is quite a lot of reading in this seminar. In the reading list which follows I have designated certain readings as “required” and others as “supplementary.” If possible it would be good to dip into the supplementary reading, but I will not expect you to read much of it.

Most of the readings are on *Electronic Reserve* on the Social Science Reference Library website under the listing for Sociology 929. In the syllabus these are marked with an asterisk: \*. You can either read these items online or print them out.

In addition, the following books are at the Rainbow Bookstore Cooperative on Gilman Street:

- Erik Olin Wright (ed). *Approaches to Class Analysis* (Cambridge University Press: 2005)
- Paul Kingston, *The Classless Society* (Stanford, 2000)
- Charles Tilly, *Durable Inequality* (University of California Press, 1998)
- Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction* (Harvard University Press: 1984)
- Andrew Sayer, *The Moral Significance of Class* (Cambridge University Press 2005)

There are two books I tried to order but which are currently unavailable [These will be on the library’s e-reserve, but you can get used copies from various web booksellers]:

- Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power, vol. II* (Cambridge University Press, 1993)
- John Scott, *Stratification and Power* (Polity, 1996)

## SCHEDULE OF TOPICS

Week 1. 9/5 Introduction: normative and theoretical dimensions of the study of class and inequality

### I. The Marxist Tradition of Class Analysis

Week 2. 9/12 Marx's Approach to Class

Week 3. 9/19 Erik Olin Wright's reconstruction(s) of Marxist Class Analysis

Week 4. 9/26 Richard Wolf & Stephen Resnick's *class processes* approach

### II. Weberian Class Analysis

Week 5. 10/3 John Scott's reconstruction of a Weberian Class Analysis

Week 6. 10/10 John Goldthorpe's quasi-Weberian approach

### III. Marx/Weber Amalgams

Week 7. 10/17 Charles Tilly's Melding of Marx and Weber

Week 8. 10/24 Michael Mann's Organizational Materialism model of Class

### IV. Pierre Bourdieu's multidimensional class analysis

Week 9. 10/31 Pierre Bourdieu's approach to Class Analysis

Week 10. 11/7 Andrew Sayer's analysis of the moral dimension of class

### V. Neo-Durkheimian Class Analysis

Week 11. 11/14 David Grusky's proposal for micro-classes

### VI. The Death of Class

Week 12. 11/21 Is Class still a central dimension of social structure?

### Writing term papers

Week 13. 11/28 no seminar meeting

Week 14. 12/5 no seminar meeting

Week 15. 12/12 no seminar meeting

**Mini-Conference on Class Analysis:** Saturday December 16 – Sunday, December 17

## READING ASSIGNMENTS

\* = readings on electronic reserve at social science library.

### Session 1. 9/5 Introduction: no readings

#### I. Marxist Tradition of Class Analysis

### Session 2. 9/12 Marx's Approach to Class

Marx never systematically elaborated his concept of class. In the one place where he began such an elaboration – the last chapter of volume III of *Capital* – the manuscript ends after a few short paragraphs with the sad editorial note by Engels “Here the manuscript breaks off.” Yet no concept figures more centrally within his analysis of capitalism and history. Since Marx’s analyses of class constitute the backdrop for most subsequent theoretical arguments – either in the form of elaborations and extensions or attacks and counter-proposals – we will begin the semester by looking at Marx’s own treatment of class and a number of commentaries/interpretations of his texts.

In the readings below, the *Communist Manifesto* is the treatment of class in Marx’s work that is the best known and most influential both within sociology and in the world at large. While written as a political tract designed to serve inspirational as well as analytical purposes, it nevertheless contains a sketch of a theoretically powerful understanding of class relations. The second Marx reading, “Wage Labour and Capital,” is a semi-popular pamphlet Marx wrote (which was later revised and corrected by Engel’s) in which he lays out the central ideas about class and capitalism later developed at length in *Capital*. While *Capital* is certainly a more sophisticated and elaborate treatment, the class analysis presented in the earlier work is basically the same. The commentaries on Marx by Jon Elster and G.A. Cohen provide useful systemizations of Marx’s concept of class. The Cohen reading from *Karl Marx’s Theory of History* is quite long and very detailed, but the analytical precision of his exposition makes it worthwhile to read this carefully. The final Cohen reading provides a very useful characterization of how the simple polarized concept of class in Marx figures into the broad agenda of Marxist theory.

#### *Required Readings:*

\*Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*, parts I and II

\*Karl Marx, “Wage Labour and Capital”

\*Jon Elster *Making Sense of Marx* (Cambridge University Press, 1985), 6.1 Defining Classes, pp.318-344, 6.3 Class Struggle, pp. 371-397

\*G.A. Cohen, *Karl Marx’s Theory of History: a defense* (Princeton University press, expanded edition, 2001), pp.28-114

\*G.A. Cohen, “Equality: from Fact to Norm”, pp. 101-115 in *If You are an Egalitarian How Come You’re So Rich?* (Harvard University Press, 2000)

*Supplementary Readings: Other commentaries and interpretations of Marx's approach to class*

\*Anthony Giddens, "Marx's Theory of Classes", *The Class Structure of the Advanced Societies* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973)

\*Allin Cottrell, *Social Classes in Marxist Theory* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), chapter 1. "Marx on classes and politics", pp.33-59

\*Rosemary Crompton, *Class and Stratification: an introduction to current debates* (Polity Press:1993), "Marx", pp.23-28

W. Wesolowski, *Class, Strata and Power* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979 [1966]), Chapter 1. "The Marxian Theory of Class domination", pp. 1-48

**Session 3. 9/19 Erik Olin Wright's Reconstruction of Marxist Class Analysis**

Since the mid-1970s I have been struggling with the problem of class and class analysis in the Marxist tradition. The starting point was fairly pragmatic: I wanted to do some quantitative research using the Marxist class concept – to show its explanatory power to skeptical sociologists – and I faced the problem of what to do with the "middle class." This led me through a series of efforts to provide systematic theoretical foundations for a reconstructed Marxist concept of class that would simultaneously be empirically useful and coherently integrated into the broader framework of Marxist theory. In the readings below, the first reading represents my most recent thinking on the problem as presented in my book *Class Counts* and links this formulation to the broader context of Marxist theory. The next reading, chapter 2 from *Classes*, provides a summary of my earlier work, elaborates the general methodological problem of concept formation and discusses the theoretical dilemmas I was trying to solve. Chapter 3 in *Classes* then proposes a way of solving the limitations of my early work through reconstruction of the concept of class in terms of a multidimensional view of exploitation. The final reading, from *Class Counts*, pulls back from the formulation in *Classes* and adopts a conceptual framework that in some ways is a combination of my first two strategies of analysis. The supplementary readings contain a number of critiques of my various attempts at developing a coherent Marxist class concept. If you have time it would be good to read some of these.

*Required Readings:*

Erik Olin Wright, *Foundations of Class Analysis*, Chapter 2. Foundations of a neo-Marxist class analysis

\*Erik Olin Wright, *Classes* (London: Verso, 1985), Chapter 2, "Biography of a Concept: Contradictory Class Locations" and Chapter 3, "A General Framework for the Analysis of Class", pp. 19-104

\*Erik Olin Wright, *Class Counts* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), chapter 1. Class Analysis, pp. 1-37

*Supplementary Readings: Critiques of Wright*

\*John Gubbay, "Review of Class Counts", pp. 281-299, *Historical Materialism*, No 5,

Winter 1999

\*Peter Meiksins, "A Critique of Wright's Theory of Contradictory Locations," in *The Debate on Classes*, edited by Erik Olin Wright (Verso: 1989), pp. 173-183

\*David Rose and Gordon Marshall, "Constructing the (W)right Classes," *Sociology*, 20:3, 1986, reprinted in *The Debate on Classes*, edited by Erik Olin Wright (Verso: 1989), pp. 243-265

\*Philippe Van Parijs, "A Revolution in class theory", *Politics & Society*, 15:1, 1988, reprinted in *The Debate on Classes*, edited by Erik Olin Wright (Verso: 1989), pp. 213-242

\*Guglielmo Carchedi, "Classes and Class Analysis," *Capital and Class*, vol 29, 1986, reprinted in *The Debate on Classes*, edited by Erik Olin Wright (Verso: 1989), pp. 105-126

Paul Kamolnick, *Classes: a marxist Critique* (General Hall, Inc: Dix Hills, New York: 1988)

#### **Session 4. 9/26 Another Marxian Approach to Class Analysis: Stephen Resnick and Richard Wolf's theory of "class processes"**

In terms of class analysis, Marxism should not be viewed as "a" theory of class, but as a terrain of debate over the concept of class. Indeed, one of the distinctive features of Marxist discussions of class is how much energy has been devoted precisely to the problem of debating appropriate ways of conceptualizing class. We do not have time in this seminar to survey the full range of alternative strategies of class analysis within the Marxist tradition. Instead we will focus on one distinctive approach which continues to animate a productive current of research on class, capitalism, and related topics: Stephen Resnick and Richard Wolf's theory of "class processes". Resnick and Wolff are economists at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, whose work is strongly associated with the journal *Rethinking Marxism*. They argue for a kind of post-structuralist, anti-essentialist Marxism. Rather than build the concept of class around a notion of social relations and structures, they propose anchoring it in a concept of "class processes," above all processes connected with the extraction of surplus labor. In this session we will discuss their approach and their critique of my approach to class.

#### *Required Readings:*

\*Stephen A. Resnick and Richard D. Wolff, "A Marxian Theory of Classes", in Resnick and Wolff, *Knowledge and Class* (University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 109-163

\*"The Diversity of Class Analyses: A Critique of Erik Olin Wright and Beyond." *Critical Sociology*," Volume 29, Number 1, 2003, pp. 7-27(21)

\*J.K.Gibson-Graham, Stephen Resnick and Richard Wolff, *Class and its Others* (University of Minnesota Press, 2000), chapter 1. "Introduction: Class in a Post-structuralist Frame"

### *Supplementary Readings in Other currents of Marxist Class Analysis*

- Nicos Poulantzas, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism* (London: NLB, 1975).  
 Nicos Poulantzas, "On Social Classes", *New Left Review*, 78, 1973  
 Albert Szymanski, *Class Structure: a critical perspective* (New York: Praeger, 1983)  
 Pat Walker (ed), *Between Capital and Labor* (Boston: South End Press, 1979).  
 Guiglielmo Carchedi, *On the Economic Identification of Social Classes* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977)  
 Rosemary Crompton and John Gubbay, *Economy and Class Structure* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978)  
 Dale L. Johnson (ed)., *Class & Social Development: a new theory of the middle class* (Sage, 1982).  
 Adam Przeworski, "Proletariat into a Class: the process of class formation from Kautsky's *The Class Struggle* to recent contributions", C. 2 in *Capitalism and Social Democracy* (Cambridge University Press, 1985) pp.47-97  
 J.K. Gibson-Graham, *The end of Capitalism (as we know it)*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).

## **II. Weberian Class Analysis**

Conventionally, Max Weber's general perspective on class is viewed as the principle theoretical rival to Marx's. In some ways this is misleading, for Weber's definition of class, at least within capitalist society, overlaps with that of Marx in many respects – they both adopt relational conceptions of class, they both see class relations as built around the ownership and control of economically significant assets, and they both see the relation of people to these assets as shaping material interests. Yet, there are crucial differences. Two seem especially important: first, the absence of a exploitation in Weber's conception of class relations, and second, the fact that Weber (and especially Weberians) give specificity to the problem of class through a series of contrasts with other principles of stratification, especially status.

### **Session 5. 10/3 John Scott's Reconstruction of a Weberian Class Analysis**

John Scott presents one of the most systematic and sophisticated elaborations of Weber's conceptual framework for class analysis. He is especially concerned with giving precision to the multidimensional space for relational inequality within which class plays a specific role. In the readings below I include the two standard short pieces by Weber that anchor Weber-inspired class analysis: the "Distribution of Power within the Political Community" in which he provides his basic definitions of class, and his quite cryptic chapter on "Status Groups and Classes". I also include two discussions of Weber's work: Anthony Giddens exegetical summary of Weber's position, and my exploration of the absence of "exploitation" in Weber's approach. The primary reading is Scott's book. While I have indicated which chapters are the most important for our purposes, if possible you should read the entire book.

#### *Required Readings:*

- \*Max Weber, "The Distribution of Power within the Political Community: class, status and party", in *Economy and Society*, vol.II, ed by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (U. Cal. Press, 1978), pp.926-40
- \*Max Weber, "Status Groups and Classes," in *Economy and Society*, vol. I, pp. 302-307
- \*Anthony Giddens, "The Weberian Critique", chapter 2 in *The Class Structure of the Advanced Societies* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981 second ed.), pp.41-52

\*John Scott, *Stratification & Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), esp chapters 1-4, 7

\*Erik Olin Wright, "The Shadow of Exploitation in Weber's Class Analysis", *American Sociological Review*, 2002, Vol. 67, December: 832–853

*Supplementary Readings: Other class analyses in the Weberian tradition*

\*Parkin, "Strategies of Social Closure in Class Formation", in *The Social Analysis of Class Structure* (ed by Parkin), 1974 Tavistock publications

Anthony Giddens, *The Class Structure of the Advanced Societies* (Harper and Row, 1981 second ed.)

Frank Parkin, *Marxism and Class Theory: a bourgeois Critique* (Columbia University Press, 1979)

Robert Holton and Bryan Turner, *Max Weber on Economy and Society* (Routledge: 1989), c6. "Has Class Analysis a future: Max Weber and the challenge of liberalism to *Gemeinschaftlich* accounts of class."

*Commentaries on Weber's class analysis and comparisons with Marx:*

Val Burris, "The Neo-Marxist Synthesis of Marx and Weber on Class," in Norbert Wiley (ed), *The Marx-Weber Debate* (Newbury Park, California: Sage, 1987)

Karl Löwith, *Max Weber and Karl Marx* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982)

N. Abercrombie and J. Urry, *Capital, Labour and the Middle Classes* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983)

## **Session 6. 10/10 John Goldthorpe's quasi-Weberian approach**

John Goldthorpe is the most influential empirical researcher on class and class mobility in Britain and much of Europe. His work is primarily driven by empirical considerations rather than by a preoccupation with conceptual precision and theoretical elaboration. Nevertheless, in recent years he has devoted more attention to nailing down the theoretical principles underlying his work. He insists that his work is not "Weberian", and in some respects his concern with what he terms "employment relations" has a closer affinity with Marxist concerns with production relations than traditional Weberian concerns with exchange relations. Still, Goldthorpe's overall stance seems to most people quite connected to the Weberian tradition, particularly because of its preoccupation with "life chances", and because, like other Weberians, he gives no space for exploitation in his analysis.

Goldthorpe declined my invitation to write a chapter for the *Foundations of Class Analysis* book, so a younger colleague of his, Richard Breen, took on the task. The framework he lays out, however, is basically Goldthorpe's. The piece by Goldthorpe himself, in fact, can also be seen as a foundational statement of his approach to class. The other two readings constitute a kind of mini-debate over Goldthorpe's approach as do the first three essays in the supplementary readings.

*Required Readings:*

Richard Breen, *Foundations of Class Analysis*, Chapter 3. A Weberian framework for class analysis

\*John H. Goldthorpe, "Social Class and the Differentiation of Employment Contracts" in *On Sociology* (Oxford University Press, 2000)

\*Gordon Marshall, "John Goldthorpe and Class Analysis," pp. 51-62 in *John H. Goldthorpe: consensus and controversy*, edited by Jon Clark, Celia Modgil and Sohan Modgil (The Falmer Press, 1990)

\*Goran Ahrne, "Class and Society: a critique of John Goldthorpe's Model of Social Classes," pp.65-76 in *John H. Goldthorpe: consensus and controversy*.

*Supplementary: Other work in the Goldthorpe mold & Debates over Goldthorpe's work*

\*Gordon Marshall and John H. Goldthorpe, "The Promising Future of Class Analysis," *Sociology*, 1992, 26: 381-400 reprinted in Gordon Marshall, *Repositioning Class*, Sage 1997

\*R.E. Pahl, "Does Class Analysis without Class Theory have a Promising Future: a reply to Goldthorpe and Marshall," *Sociology* 27:2 May 1993, 253-258

\*Geoff Payne, "Investing in Class Analysis Futures," *Sociology* 1996, vol 30:2 pp.339-354

Gordon Marshall, Adam Swift and Stephen Roberts, *Against the Odds? Social Class and Social Justice in Industrial Societies* (Oxford University, 1997)

Gordon Marshall, et. al, *Social Class in Modern Britain* (Hutchinson, 1988)

Robert Erickson and John H. Goldthorpe, *The Constant Flux* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993)

John H. Goldthorpe, *Social Mobility & Class Structure in Modern Britain* (Oxford: Oxford Press, 1980).

**III. Marx/Weber Amalgams**

There is no rule of sociological theory which says "thou shalt not mix and match conceptual traditions". In various ways, many theoretically-minded sociologists who also get their hands dirty with empirical and historical research bring together Marxian and Weberian elements into some kind more or less integrated amalgam. Indeed, my own work on "contradictory class locations" has been called by some a Weberianization of the Marxist concept (see Gubbay's review of my work in week 3). In the next two sessions we will examine two scholars whose work, in quite different ways, combines elements of Marx and Weber. One issue we should address here is whether the result is basically a pragmatic pastiche or a fully-integrated conceptual synthesis.

**Session 7. 10/17 Charles Tilly's Melding of Marx and Weber**

For most of his career Charles Tilly has been known as a leading historical sociologist working on problems of social movements, collective action and the state. He is most noted for what is called the “resource mobilization” perspective in social movements, where the emphasis is placed on the character of resources and constraints faced by movements rather than on their grievances in explaining collective action. In recent years he has produced a series of “big” statements on the large, enduring themes of macro-sociology – the development of the state, the relationship between large scale social structure and epochal patterns of social change, and now the nature of “durable inequalities”. His self-characterization of the perspective of this work is that it is a bridge between Marx and Weber, but in many ways it seems to me its underlying logic is more firmly rooted in Marx. Some people may find the book a bit annoying because of its self-representation as a grand synthesis of everything and its tendency to level straw-man-type attacks at various people, but I think it is worth reading as an attempt to elaborate a set of categories for encompassing virtually all forms of inequality within a single scheme.

The supplementary reading are papers from a symposium on Tilly's book held at the annual meeting of the Social Science History Association.

*Required Readings:*

Charles Tilly, *Durable Inequality* (University of California Press, 1998)

*Supplementary Readings:*

\*Symposium on *Durable Inequalities* in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* vol 42:2, April 2000

\*Erik Olin Wright, “Metatheoretical Foundations of Charles Tilly's Durable Inequality”, pp 458-474

\*Barbara Laslett, “The Poverty of (Monocausal) Theory: A Comment on Charles Tilly's Durable Inequality, pp 475-481

\*Aldon Morris, “Building Blocks of Social Inequality: A Critique of Durable Inequality” pp.482-486

\*Charles Tilly, “Errors, Durable and Otherwise” pp. 487-93

**Session 8. 10/24 Michael Mann's Collective Actor centered model of Class**

Michael Mann is a British historical sociologist (now teaching at UCLA) who has been engaged in a massive long-term project on the development of the state and, even more broadly, what might be called the history of power. The work is of extraordinary ambition, breadth and erudition. In volume II of the project he introduces a particular way of understanding class and its relationship to other forms of power. His ideas here are quite complex and not always entirely clear, but I think they pose an interesting challenge to both Marxist and Weberian approaches while drawing from both. At its core is the problem of collective action – of actors organized into

collective social forces to pursue their goals – and the way classes are constituted through such collective action.

The book is quite massive and deals with many issues outside of the main concerns of the seminar. I have selected the chapters for particular attention that focus primarily on class.

*Required Readings:*

\*Michael Mann, “Societies as Organized Power Networks”, chapter 1 in *The Sources of Social Power*, volume I (Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 1-33

\*Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, volume 2: *the Rise of Classes and Nation States, 1760-1914* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), especially chapters 1-3, 7, 15-17, 20

\*Erik Olin Wright, “Michael Mann’s Two Frameworks of Class Analysis”, unpublished manuscript, 2002

#### **IV. Pierre Bourdieu**

Pierre Bourdieu is the single most influential Sociologist in the past twenty years or so, probably the only French sociologist most American sociologists have every heard of. As is typical of much French sociology, his work often explores very abstract philosophical and metatheoretical questions, and – also in French fashion – his exposition of these abstract ideas is often rather vague and obscure. Nevertheless, his work is also usually intensely interesting, filled with juicy empirical observations and insightful theoretical formulations.

In terms of his work on class, the most important idea is the way in which classes are constituted through the location of people in a social space defined by their relation to a variety of *forms of capital* – cultural capital, social capital, symbolic capital, financial capital. Class analysis concerns the distributions of these forms of capital, the dynamic ways in which one form of capital can be converted into another, and the consequences of these distributions and dynamics for various empirical problems of social life.

#### **Session 9.10/31 Pierre Bourdieu’s approach to Class Analysis**

One of the problems in studying Bourdieu’s work on class is that he almost never lays out in a systematic way the basic theoretical structure of his core concepts. Instead, his class analysis is largely embedded in his massive empirical work. Of these, the most important is *Distinction*. I have assigned only a limited number of pages of this book as much to give you a sense of the kind of work Bourdieu does as to clarify the underlying structure of his ideas. Our discussion will revolve more around two shorter pieces in which he does sketch the central elements of his approach, and the careful synthetic exegeses of his work in the chapter by Elliott Weininger in *Approaches to Class Analysis*, and the article by Rogers Brubaker.

*Required Readings:*

Elliott Weininger, *Foundations of Class Analysis*, chapter 4. Foundations of Pierre Bourdieu's class analysis

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

\*Rogers Brubaker, "Rethinking Classical Theory: the sociological vision of Pierre Bourdieu," *Theory and Society* 14 (1985) pp.745-775

\*Pierre Bourdieu, "What Makes a Social Class? On the Theoretical and Practical Existence of Groups" *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* XXXII, 1987, pp. 1-18

Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction* (Harvard University Press, 1984), pp.99-168, 397-484

*Supplementary Reading*

\*Elliott Weininger, "Class and Causation in Bourdieu", forthcoming in *Current Perspectives in Social Theory* 21 (2001).

Pierre Bourdieu and Loic Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992)

**Session 10. 11/7 Andrew Sayer's exploration of the moral dimension of class analysis**

In his book, *The Moral Significance of Class*, Andrew Sayer presents a sympathetic critique and reconstruction of Pierre Bourdieu's approach to class by focusing on the importance of moral sentiments rather than just interests in constructing a concept of class. The central focus of Sayer's critique is Bourdieu's concept of "habitus". In Bourdieu's analysis, according to Sayer, the dispositions characterizing a habitus are understood primarily as instrumental orientations to the requirements of occupying particular positions within a social field: by and large people acquire the necessary dispositions for them to function effectively within the social positions they occupy. Sayer challenges this general "complicity between habitus and habitat" by arguing first, that human dispositions to act in various ways are not simply the result of conditioning but also of what he evocatively calls "the internal conversations" of "mundane reflexivity", and second, that these internal conversations help shape moral commitments and sensibilities. He then explores the ramifications of this moral dimension of habitus for the analysis of class.

*Required reading:*

Andrew Sayer, *The Moral Significance of Class* (Cambridge University Press, 2005)

**V. Neo-Durkheimian Class Analysis**

Durkheim is not generally viewed as a primary source for class analysis. He hardly ever uses the term. Yet there are ideas within Durkheim which can be deployed as the basis for elaborating class-like concepts. David Grusky, a former student of Bob Hauser and a hard-core number-

crunching stratification researcher, proposes to ground the concept of class within the analysis of the division of labor. He argues against the general practice of class analysts to try to construct classes as large groupings of persons, and instead proposes a methodology for understanding classes as small, homogeneous “micro-classes”. One of the issues to think about in reading his approach is whether there is any “value-added” in calling the categories he generates through this approach “classes”.

### **Session 11. 11/14 Locating Class in the Division of Labor**

#### *Required Readings:*

David Grusky, *Foundations of Class Analysis*, chapter 3. “Foundations of a neoDurkheimian class analysis”

\*David Grusky and Kim Weeden, “Are there Social Classes? An Empirical Test of the Sociologist’s Favorite Concept”, unpublished manuscript, 2006

\*Kim Weeden and David Grusky, “The Case for a New Class Map,” *American Journal of Sociology*

### **VI. The Death of Class**

After spending a semester deeply exploring some of the important approaches to class analysis, it may seem absurd to entertain the idea that class has become an irrelevant category of social analysis and that class analysis obscures rather than clarifies the important structural and dynamic features of contemporary society. Yet this is a view held by an increasing number of sociologists, and it is a view that has a certain real influence even among critical scholars. Jan Pakulski is a Polish-born Australian sociologist who positions himself on the left and is certainly a critic of domination, inequality and oppression, but nevertheless feels that class is dead. Paul Kingston, less clearly identified with critical traditions of thought, goes further and argues we are in what is tantamount to a classless society. Rather than dismiss these views out of hand, we should interrogate them closely.

### **Session 12. 11/21 Is Class still a central dimension of social structure?**

#### *Required Readings:*

\*Jan Pakulski, *Foundations of Class Analysis*, chapter 7. “Foundations of anti-class analysis”  
Paul Kingston, *The Classless Society* (Stanford, 2000)

#### *Supplementary Readings: a debate over the death of class thesis*

\*Jan Pakulski and Malcom Waters, “The Reshaping and Dissolution of Social Class in Advanced Society” *Theory and Society*; 1996, 25:5, Oct, 667-691.

\*Erik Olin Wright, “The Continuing Relevance of Class Analysis - Comments,” *Theory-and-Society*, 1996, 25:5, Oct, 693-716.

\*Jeff Manza and Clem Brooks “Does Class Analysis Still Have Anything to Contribute to the Study of Politics?-Comments,” *Theory and Society*, 1996, 25:5, Oct, 717-724.

\*Jan Pakulski and Malcom Waters, “Misreading Status as Class: A Reply to Our Critics,” *Theory and Society*, 1996, 25:5, Oct, 731-736.

Jan Pakulski and Malcolm Waters, *The Death of Class* (Sage, 1996)

## OTHER TOPICS (not included in sessions)

### 1. Theoretical Issues in the Concept of Exploitation

The problem of “exploitation” is the pivot of the Marxist concept of class. If one drops exploitation from the analysis, Marxist class analysis becomes almost indistinguishable from Weberian approaches and class becomes a way of talking about the economic determinants of life chances. In this session we will look closely at the concept of exploitation, both in its classical formulation within the Labor Theory of Value (as explicated in the Sweezy reading) and in some contemporary reformulations. The Elster reading is primarily exegetical, although it contains a range of important critical commentaries as well. Cohen argues that the idea of exploitation in no way depends upon the LTV, and indeed is in a certain way at odds with the labor theory of value. Roemer proposes a fairly radical reworking of Marx’s approach to exploitation, disengaging it completely from the labor theory of value and specifying it within the methods of analytical economics. Roemer’s work is difficult, but it is worth struggling with. While my own approach to exploitation now differs significantly from Roemer’s, it was initially inspired by Roemer’s strategy. In the final selection, Roemer himself begins to question whether exploitation is all that important, and decides – incorrectly in my view – that Marxists need not worry about it.

#### *Readings:*

\*Paul Sweezy, *The Theory of Capitalist Development* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1947), chapter IV. “Surplus Value and Capitalism”, pp. 56-71

\*Jon Elster, *Making Sense of Marx* (Cambridge University Press, 1985), section 3.2 “The Labor Theory of Value”, pp.127-141 and section 4.1 “The Nature and Causes of Exploitation”, pp. 166-204

\*G.A. Cohen, “The Labour Theory of Value and the Concept of Exploitation,” chapter 11 in *History, Labour and Freedom* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988)

\*John Roemer, “New Directions in the Marxian Theory of Class and Exploitation”, *Politics & Society*, 11:3, 1981 pp.253-287

\*Erik Olin Wright, *Class Counts* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 9-17

\*John Roemer, "Should Marxists be Interested in Exploitation?" *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 14:1 (1985), pp.30-65

### *Commentaries on Roemer's Approach*

\*Alan Carling, *Social Division* (Verso: 1991), Part II. Market Exchange and Class Division, pp. 73-150

\*Erik Olin Wright, "The Status of the Political in the Concept of Class Structure," *Politics & Society*, 11:3, 1981, 321-341

\*Jon Elster, "Roemer vs. Roemer", *Politics & Society*, 11:3, 1981, 363-73

\*Andrew Levine, "Toward a Marxian Theory of Justice," *Politics & Society*, 11:3, 1981, 343-62

\*Margaret Levi and Douglass C. North, "Toward a Property-Rights Theory of Exploitation", *Politics & Society*, 11:3, 1981, 315-320

\*Adam Przeworski, "Exploitation, class conflict and socialism: the Ethical Materialism of John Roemer", *Politics & Society*, 11:3, 1981 289-313

\*John Roemer, "Reply", *Politics & Society*, 11:3, 1981, 375-394

### *Other readings on the Labor theory of value approach to exploitation*

Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. I

Chapter 6. The Sale and Purchase of Labor power. pp.270-280

Chapter 7. The Labor Process and the Valorization Process. 283-306

Chapter 8. Constant Capital and Variable Capital. 307-319

Chapter 9. The Rate of Surplus Value. 320-329

Chapter 10. The Working Day. 340-344,375-416.

Chapter 11. The Rate and Mass of Surplus Value. 417-426

Chapter 12. The Concept of Relative Surplus Value. 429-438

Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, "Structure and Practice in the Labor Theory of Value", *Review of Radical Political Economics*, 12:4, 1983, pp.1-26.

Ian Steedman, *Marx after Sraffa* (London: NLB, 1977), pp. 13-29

Ian Steedman, et. al. *The Value Controversy* (London: NLB/Verso, 1981). Especially the following:

Erik Olin Wright, "The Value Controversy and Social Research", pp.36-74.

Geoff Hodgson, "Critique of Wright: 1. Labour and Profits".pp.75-99

P. Bandyopadhyay, "Critique of Wright: 2. In Defense of a Post-Straffan Approach", pp. 100-129

Erik Olin Wright, "Reconsiderations", pp.130-162

Bob Rowthorn, "Neo-Classicism, Neo-Ricardianism and Marxism", *New Left Review* #86, 1974.

G.C. Harcourt, "The Theoretical and Social Significance of the Cambridge Controversies in the Theory of Capital", *ibid.* pp.285-303.

*Additional readings by Roemer:*

*Free to Lose* (Harvard University Press, 1988), chapters 2, 5 and 7.

*A General Theory of Exploitation and Class* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 1-25, 194-216, 233-289

"Exploitation, Alternatives and Socialism", *The Economic Journal*, March, 1982.

"Methodological Individualism and Deductive Marxism", *Theory and Society*, 11:4, 1982

## 2. Class as Rent-taking

Aage Sørensen has proposed using the concept of "rent" as a way of understanding the distinctive mechanism that underlies the class/exploitation relationship. Sorenson argues that the role of *rents* in understanding prices and economic processes can potentially be extended into a general sociological understanding of how the control of assets gives actors "surplus advantages". A "rent" is an income that derives from the control over a valuable asset in short supply. In the classic analysis of rent by David Ricardo the asset in question was high fertility land: owners received a rent for such land because of its higher productivity even though the cost of producing such land was no different from any other land. Aage Sørensen has applied this idea to create a general concept of class based on the idea of rent-seeking and rent-appropriating: classes are defined as categories of actors capable of appropriating rents by virtue of their monopoly position over specific kinds of assets. This has the advantage of generalizing the concept exploitation beyond the specific context of capital ownership, but it may also undermine the normative power of the concept of exploitation and break its linkage to the notion of domination, conflict of interests and advantage.

*Readings:*

\*Aage Sørensen, *Foundations of Class Analysis*, chapter 6. A neo-Ricardian framework for class analysis

\*Erik Olin Wright, "Class, Exploitation and Economic Rents", *American Journal of Sociology* 105:6 (May 2000): 1559-71

\*John H Goldthorpe, "Rent, Class Conflict and Class Structure," *American Journal of Sociology* 105:6 (May 2000): 1572-82

\*Dietrich Rueschemeyer and James Mahoney, "A Neo-Utilitarian Theory of Class," *American Journal of Sociology* 105:6 (May 2000): 1583-91