

The Middle Classes: A Global Perspective

Anthropology (NANT3690)
Tuesdays: 6:00pm-7:50pm
Building A, Room 713
The New School, Fall 2007

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There is a constant stream of media attention in the United States to the state of the middle classes. On the one hand, there is growing concern about the cultural and political implications of the “fragile middle class” in the United States and the “missing middle” in Latin America. At the same time, there is curious fascination (and competitive envy) of places where middle classes are expanding, particularly India and China. This course provides students with an analytical vocabulary and theoretical framework through which to engage these discussions and discern rhetoric from reality. We begin by reading theorists of class for their approach to those who are “between labor and capital,” ranging from Marx and Weber to Mill and Ehrenreich. We then turn to ethnographic accounts of everyday life among the middle classes in sites that include high-tech firms in China, malls in Buenos Aires, neighborhoods in Delhi, and cinema halls in Kathmandu.

Required Readings:

The following required texts are available for purchase at Shakespeare & Company (716 Broadway @ Washington Place). A coursepack of required reading materials is available for purchase at Advanced Copy Center (552 Laguardia Place @ 3rd Street). The texts and the coursepack also are being held on reserve at Fogelman Library (65 Fifth Avenue):

- Fernandes, Leela. 2006. *India's New Middle Class: Democratic Politics in an Era of Economic Reform*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Lacy, Karyn R. 2007. *Blue-Chip Black: Race, Class, and Status in the New Black Middle Class*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Liechty, Mark. 2003. *Suitably Modern: Making Middle-Class Culture in a New Consumer Society*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- O'Dougherty, Maureen. 2002. *Consumption Intensified: The Politics of Middle-Class Daily Life in Brazil*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Ross, Andrew. 2007. *Fast Boat to China: High-Tech Outsourcing and the Consequences of Free Trade: Lessons from Shanghai*. New York: Vintage.

Assignments and Grading:

Weekly Journal (30%): Each week during which there are outside readings, credit students are required to submit 1-page of writing (typed, single-spaced). These weekly journals are a chance for you to process your thoughts on the week's readings before our class discussion. The first couple of paragraphs should summarize the authors' key ideas and arguments. The final paragraph(s) may either discuss links to other weeks' readings or explore connections between issues raised in the material and your own observations of the contemporary middle classes.

Your overall grade for these short writings will reflect your critical engagement with the reading material. **Because the weekly journals are an opportunity to organize your thoughts *before* class, they will not be accepted after the date on which they are due.**

Class Participation (20%): Your grade for class participation is not calculated by how much you speak, but rather how you participate in enabling a lively and useful discussion. At times this means bouncing an idea off the group or bringing up something that's puzzling you. At other times this involves asking one of your peers to elaborate more fully on a thought that they are sharing. And sometimes this entails sitting quietly and holding onto an idea that can best be entertained at a later point in the discussion. It is important that everyone get the chance to participate fully in our class discussions. We will be learning as much from each other as we will from our readings and our writing projects. All credit students are required to attend our weekly classes, so I expect you to let me know if you are unable to attend. **Extenuating circumstances aside, your grade for the course as a whole will be lowered upon more than 2 absences.**

Midterm Writing Assignment (20%): Your Midterm Writing Assignment is an opportunity to apply the theories that we read in the first half of the course. Each student will select on their own an article about the middle class(es) that has been published in a major newspaper (anywhere in the world) during the past year. Drawing on at least two of the readings from the first half of the course, write a "Letter to the Editor" that discusses types of class analysis that were not provided by the author of the article. A few weeks before your assignments are due, I will bring into class a sample of a "Letter to the Editor" so that all students will be familiar with the genre before working on their own letters. While most "Letters to the Editor" are only a few paragraphs long, for the purpose of this assignment, your letters should be 3-5 pages in length (typed, double-spaced). **Your Midterm Writing Assignment is due on October 16th. No papers will be accepted late, extenuating circumstances aside.**

End-of-Term Writing Assignment (30%): Your End-of-Term Writing Assignment is an opportunity to provide a more extended commentary than what was enabled through your "Letter to the Editor." For your final writing assignment, you will write an "Op-Ed" piece of 8-10 pages in length (typed, double-spaced). You may choose to provide an extended commentary on the issue addressed in your "Letter to the Editor," or you may choose to write an opinion piece on another issue pertaining to the middle class(es). If you choose to write on a new topic, you will need to meet with me in advance for approval. A few weeks before your assignments are due, I will bring into class a sample of an "Op-Ed" piece so that all students will be familiar with the genre before working on their own commentaries. **Your End-of-Term Writing Assignment is due on December 18th. No papers will be accepted late, extenuating circumstances aside.**

Other Important Information:

University Writing Center: The University Writing Center offers students individual tutoring sessions that cover every phase of the writing process. Students can meet with a tutor to revise a paper, develop a rough draft, or discuss how to approach and organize an assignment. To find out more information or to make an appointment, go to <http://www.newschool.edu/admin/writingcenter>.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism will result in an F in the course in accordance with the University's policy on plagiarism (see Student Handbook). Students should purchase *A Writer's Reference* by Diana Hacker for information on proper citation format.

Students with Disabilities: In keeping with the University's policy of providing equal access for students with disabilities, any student with a disability who needs academic accommodations should contact the office of Student Disability Services. All conversations will be kept confidential. Students requesting any accommodations will also need to meet with Jason Luchs in the office of Student Disability Services, who will conduct an intake, and if appropriate, provide an academic accommodation notification letter. Mr. Luchs' office is located at 79 Fifth Avenue on the 5th floor. His direct line is 212.229.5626 x3135. You may also access more information through the University's web site: <http://www.newschool.edu/studentservices/disability>.

Incompletes: A grade of "incomplete" may be assigned under extenuating circumstances. If an incomplete is granted, you have a maximum of 4 weeks after the last day of class to complete and submit the outstanding work. An incomplete becomes an "Unofficial Withdrawal and Failure" (WF) if the work is not submitted in a timely fashion.

Class Schedule:

September 4: Introduction: The Contemporary Discourse on the Middle Classes

Part I. THEORIES OF THE MIDDLE CLASS(ES):

September 11: Would the Middle Class "Transfer into the Proletariat" or Continue to Grow?

- Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. 1968 [1848]. *The Communist Manifesto*. New York: Modern Reader Paper Backs, pp. 2-24.
- Poulantzas, Nicos. 1974. "The Class Determination of the Traditional Petty Bourgeoisie" in *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, pp. 285-286.
- Blumin, Stuart Mack. 1989. *The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 17-107, 138-191.
- Recommended Readings: Ryan, Mary P. 1983. *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida Country, New York, 1790-1865*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Bledstein, Burton J. and Robert D. Johnson, eds. 2001. *The Middling Sorts: Exploration in the History of the American Middle Class*. New York: Routledge.

September 18: Elaborating Class Power: "Status Groups" and "Styles of Life"

- Weber, Max. 1947. "Social Stratification and Class Structure; The Concepts of Class and Class Status" in *Max Weber: The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, ed. Talcott Parsons. New York: The Free Press, pp. 424-429.
- Weber, Max. 1958. "Class, Status, Party" in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, eds. and trans. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. New York: Oxford University Press, 180-195.
- de Botton, Alain. 2004. *Status Anxiety*. New York: Vintage, pp. 5-102, 175-213.

September 25: The Bureaucratization and Depolitization of the “New Middle Class”

- Mills, C. Wright. 1951. *White Collar: The American Middle Classes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 63-76, 100-111, 189-192, 204-233, 248-258, 265-272, 278-282, 289-300, 324-354.
- Recommended Readings: Weber, Max. 1958. “Bureaucracy” in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, eds. and trans. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. New York: Oxford University Press, 196-244; Poulantzas, Nicos. 1974. “The New Petty Bourgeoisie and the Bureaucratization of Mental Labor” in *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, pp. 271-281.

October 2: Esthetic Domination and the Middle Classes’ “Concern for ‘Seeming’”

- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. “Preface to the English-Language Edition,” “Introduction,” “The Habitus and the Space of Life-Styles,” and “The Sense of Distinction” in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, pp. xi-xiv, 1-7, 169-225, 260-317.
- In-Class Documentary: “People Like Us: Social Class in America” (2001)

October 9: The Professional-Managerial Class and the Transition to Transnationalism

- Ehrenreich, Barbara and John Ehrenreich. 1979. “The Professional-Managerial Class.” In *Between Labor and Capital*, ed. Pat Walker, 5-45. Boston, M.A.: South End Press.
- Rouse, Roger. 1995. Thinking through Transnationalism: Notes on the Cultural Politics of Class Relations in the Contemporary United States. *Public Culture* 7:353-402.

October 16: Applying Theories of the Middle Class(es)

- *****Midterm Writing Assignment Due*****
- Wacquant, L  ic J.D. 1991. “Making Class: The Middle Class(es) in Social Theory and Social Structure” in *Bringing Class Back In: Contemporary and Historical Perspectives*, eds. Scott G. McNall, Rhonda F. Levine, and Rick Fantasia. Boulder, C.O.: Westview Press, pp. 39-64.
- Recommended Readings: Giddens, Anthony. 1973. “The Growth of the New Middle Class” in *The Class Structure of Advanced Societies*. New York: Harper Torchbooks, pp. 177-197; Urry, John. 1973. Towards a Structural Theory of the Middle Class. *Acta Sociologica* 16: 175-187; Goulder, Alvin W. 1979. *The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class*. New York: The Seabury Press; Wright, Erik Olin. 1989. “A General Framework for the Analysis of Class Structure” in *The Debate on Classes*, ed. Erik Olin Wright. New York: Verso, 3-43; Ortner, Sherry B. 1998. “Identities: The Hidden Life of Class.” *Journal of Anthropological Research* 54(1): 1-17.

Part II: THE FRAGILE MIDDLE CLASS(ES): FALLING AND COLLAPSING:

October 23: Falling from Grace: Downward Mobility in the American Middle Class

- Newman, Katherine S. 1988. “Rejected Managers and the Culture of Meritocracy” and “The Downwardly Mobile Family” in *Falling from Grace: The Experience of Downward Mobility in the American Middle Class*. New York: Vintage Books, pp. 42-142.

- Recommended Books: Ehrenreich, Barbara. 1989. *Fear of Falling: The Inner Life of the Middle Class*. New York: HarperPerennial; Ehrenreich, Barbara. 2005. *Bait and Switch: The (Futile) Pursuit of the American Dream*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2005.

October 30: Neoliberal Argentina: Education, Race, and Urban Space in Buenos Aires

- Guano, Emanuela. 2003. A Color for the Modern Nation: The Discourse on Class, Race and Education in the *Porteño* Middle Class. *Journal of Latin American Anthropology* 8(1): 148 - 171.
- Guano, Emanuela. 2002. Spectacles of Modernity: Transnational Imagination and Local Hegemonies in Neoliberal Buenos Aires. *Cultural Anthropology*. 17(2): 181-209.
- Guest Speaker: Michael Cohen, Director of the International Affairs Program, The New School; Former Senior Advisor, The World Bank, Argentina

November 6: Consuming Middle-Class Identities: Life During the Economic Crisis in Brazil

- O'Dougherty, Maureen. 2002. *Consumption Intensified: The Politics of Middle-Class Daily Life in Brazil*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 1-93, 111-131, 195-206.
- Recommended Reading: Lomnitz, Claudio. 2003. Times of Crisis: Historicity, Sacrifice, and the Spectacle of Debacle in Mexico City. *Public Culture* 15(1):127-147.

Part III: THE GROWING MIDDLE CLASS(ES): RISING AND REDEFINING:

November 13: The Liberalizing Middle Class in India: In Ads, At Work, and In Neighborhoods

- Fernandes, Leela. 2006. *India's New Middle Class: Democratic Politics in an Era of Economic Reform*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, Selections.
- Recommended Readings: Mazzarella, William. 2003. *Shoveling Smoke: Advertising and Globalization in Contemporary India*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press; Raj, Dhooлека S. 2003. *Where Are You From?: Middle-Class Migrants in the Modern World*. Berkeley: University of California Press; Ong, Aihwa. 2006. "Labor Arbitrage: Displacements and Betrayals in Silicon Valley" in *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, pp. 157-174.

November 20: No Class – Thursday Classes Meet

November 27: "Middle-Classness": Consumption, Media, and "Modern" Youth in Nepal

- Liechty, Mark. 2003. *Suitably Modern: Making Middle-Class Culture in a New Consumer Society*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

December 4: Identities and Alliances: Everyday Life Among the Suburban Black Middle Class

- Lacy, Karyn R. *Blue-Chip Black: Race, Class, and Status in the New Black Middle Class*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007, Selections.
- Recommended Readings: Frazier, E. Franklin. 1957. *Black Bourgeoisie: The Rise of a New Middle Class*. New York: The Free Press; Patillo-McCoy, Mary. 1999. *Black Picket Fences: Privilege and Peril Among the Black Middle Class*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

December 11: High-Tech Workers in China: New Jobs, New Instabilities, and New Insecurities

- Ross, Andrew. 2007. *Fast Boat to China: High-Tech Outsourcing and the Consequences of Free Trade: Lessons from Shanghai*. New York: Vintage, Selections.
- Guest Speaker: Andrew Ross, Professor of Social and Cultural Analysis, NYU

December 18: Whither the Middle Class?

- *****End-of-Term Writing Assignment Due*****