Centre College Class Culture Fall 2015

Beau Weston (A&S 500) beau.weston@centre.edu

Hours: MWF 9:30 – noon (Hub); Tuesday 9 – 11 (C330)

*For Lareau: It so closely parallels MacLeod, that it is tempting to read them back to back. Doing so would have us read the easier Lubrano before Spring Break, which might be good.*

*It is also tempting to assign the article in place of the original book, and just have them read the new material from the book. However, I think they would feel cheated if they bought the book but did not read it. So, I need to read the book again and choose enough to get the idea. In the new part, ch. 13 is essential (50), and 15 is useful (10). She also has a four-page appendix, ”Theory: Understanding the Work of Pierre Bourdieu,” which might be helpful to read later. That appendix points to Stacey Marshall as an important case, so think of assigning that chapter particularly.*

 *I might also suggest that the students who did not take 120 should read the Lareau article and the McIntosh privilege piece over the summer, so I can refer to them. I might even send everyone McIntosh in July as a refresher.*

### Aim

The Advanced Research Seminar in Class Culture has two objectives. One is to understand the structure of social classes, the broad cultural divisions among them, and your place and responsibility within that structure.

The other is to help you research and write a good sociological study within the broad topic of "class culture."

Texts

P. N. Furbank, *Unholy Pleasure, or, the Idea of Social Class*, ch. 1. [Moodle = M]

Frank Parkin, *Marxism and Class Theory: A Bourgeois Critique*, excerpt [M]

Alana Semuels, “The City that Believed in Desgregation” (from *The Atlantic*)

Jay Macleod, Ain't No Makin' It, 3rd edition

Barbara Ehrenreich, Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America

Alfred Lubrano, Limbo: Blue-Collar Roots, White-Collar Dreams

Annette Lareau, *Unequal Childhoods,* 2nd edition

Charles Murray, *Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960 - 2010*

Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: The Social Critique to the Judgement of Taste*

Work

**Short Papers** [40%]

Most weeks you will write a short paper (2 – 3pp) on the Paper Prompt [PP] given for that week. Due by noon Thursday through Moodle, so I can read them all before seminar. You may skip one. If you skip, submit an “I am skipping this week” message through Moodle so that I know you did it on purpose. I will give a placeholder grade of 13, which I will delete before the final averaging. *Changed to “I will drop the lowest score, counting a skipped paper as a 13.”*

**Seminar Paper** [40%]

You will write a paper analyzing the class and status of a topic of your choosing. One excellent way to conduct this project is to write about your summer job, but there are many other fine approaches. *We should discuss your project individually before the Spring Term ends.*

This paper will be turned in in three parts:

Literature Review [10%].

The point of a literature review is to read enough of the chain of research relevant to your topic that you can join the ongoing educated conversation about the subject. While your article is not an academic paper, you should read academic papers on the same subject to understand the intellectual context. Read at least ten articles, or the book equivalent. Write a narrative summary of what previous scholars have found leading up to your research. Then give a clear statement of the *thesis* that you want to explore (test) in your research, and your plan for conducting that research (including work you have already done).Use Alana Semuels’ *Atlantic* article, “The City That Believed in Desegregation,” as a model of how to integrate academic research, journalism, interviews, and observation into a readable and informative article. About 8pp.

Academic Appendix [10%]

In this report, you should explain the *methods* *of research* that you are using in your seminar paper, and the *theoretical approach* that you are taking to your topic. Often in journalistic writing, method and theory are implicit. You may conclude that in your final paper you also wish to minimize discussion of method and theory – or not. In this paper, you should explain what methods of research are used in the academic studies that you are using (the stuff of your literature review), the methods of research you used in your own data collection, and the further methods, if any, by which you incorporated all your sources into your final paper. Likewise, you should explain the theoretical issues at stake in your paper and your approach to those issues. In discussing both method and theory, you should give a critical account of why you chose those methods and theories over alternatives. You will probably need to talk these questions out with me, and perhaps a small group of fellow students, before writing this paper. The academic appendix is due after the 8th week of the term. I will give it a 90% grade at that time. You have the option of improving it by the time the seminar paper is due, for an addition of up to five points on the appendix grade. About 8pp.

My class culture project, incorporating Bourdieu [20%].

You will analyze some social phenomenon in terms of its class culture, status markers, and structural position. We will spend the term mastering what those concepts mean. In the last third of the class we will read through Pierre Bourdieu’s dense but enlightening *Distinction*; each week you will write a paper connecting Bourdieu’s argument with your topic. These papers, plus your literature review, should help you pull together your final paper. The style of this paper should be like that of articles in *The Atlantic Monthly* or the longer articles in *The New Yorker*. These are not academic papers, but are written to broaden the understanding of the educated lay public. This is due the Sunday after the last seminar. I will make them all into a physical magazine, the *Centre Class Culture Journal*. About 25pp.

**Participation** [20%]

This is a seminar – everyone has to contribute, or it won’t work. For the same reason, attendance is mandatory (“seminar is sacred.”) We will meet from 7 to 10 p.m. on Thursdays in Crounse 401 (the “fishbowl”). We will sign up to bring food for a mid-seminar break. The first class will meet at my house (143 St. Mildred’s Ct.).

Schedule

9/3 All Class Taxonomies Are Invidious

P. N. Furbank, *Unholy Pleasure, or, the Idea of Social Class*, ch. 1. [M]

Frank Parkin, *Marxism and Class Theory: A Bourgeois Critique*, excerpt [M]

Alana Semuels, “The City That Believed in Desegregation”, *The Atlantic*, March 27, 2015. We will analyze the form of this article in detail, so please read it twice.

In-class exercise: A close reading of this room. [And maybe a walk, too]

Paper Prompt [PP]: Explain the idea of ‘social closure’.

(Weston house)

9/10 Starting Out Near the Bottom …

Jay Macleod, Ain’t No Makin’ It, third edition, chs. 1 – 3, 6 & 7 (100)

PP: What is the “achievement ideology,” and what is MacLeod’s theoretical critique of it?

9/17 … and Not Making it Much Higher

Jay Macleod, Ain’t No Makin’ It, third edition. Skim chs. 9 & 10, Read 11, 14; within ch. 12, read Shorty’s story; within ch. 13 read James’ story. [100]

PP: You have a choice this week;

At the end of Part Two, MacLeod asks “To what extent are the Hallway Hangers and Brothers victims of a limited opportunity structure, and to what extent are they victims of their own flawed choices?” (257). How do you answer that for the men in this book? How do you answer it for your own life, with less limited opportunities and fewer flawed choices? OR

At the end of Part Three, McClelland and Karen conclude that MacLeod was right about social reproduction (457). What do they mean, and are they right?

9/24 Working Poor

Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed*, ch. 3 and Evaluation [110]

PP: Consider Ehrenreich’s notion that there is something wrong with society if a single healthy person cannot support herself alone.

9/27 Literature Review due, 5pm [This is a Sunday]

10/1 Crossing Class Lines and Double Consciousness

Alfred Lubrano, Limbo: Blue-Collar Roots, White-Collar Dreams, chs. 1, 3, 6, 7 (115)

PP: Explain what Lubrano means by a ‘straddler’. Illustrate with a good example of your own, if possible.

10/8 Class Differences in Rearing the Next Generation

Annette Lareau, *Unequal Childhoods*, second edition, chs. 1, 3, 5, 13 (115)

PP: You have a choice this week. What are “concerted cultivation” and “natural growth”, and how do they relate to EITHER social closure OR social mobility?

10/15 FALL BREAK

10/22 The Great Class Divide

Charles Murray, *Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960 – 2010*, chs. 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 15, and brief introductions to Part One and Part Two (120)

PP: What are Belmont and Fishtown, and why is their growing divide important?

10/29 Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction*, ch. 2 (60)

PP: What does Bourdieu mean by the ‘dimensions’ of the social space?

11/1 Academic Appendix 90% draft due, 5pm [This is a Sunday]

11/5 Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction*, ch. 3 (60)

PP: What is the ‘habitus’ and what does it have to do with class culture (or with taste)?

11/12 Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction*, ch. 4 (30)

PP: Illustrate Bourdieu’s concept of a ‘field’ with an example from your topic.

11/19 Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction*, ch. 5 (60)

PP: ~~Explain Figure 13 (hint: it is a simplified version of Figures 11 and 12).~~

*Changed to:* Bourdieu writes “One’s immediate intuition should be followed” in discerning correspondences (269). Using that paragraph as an example, use your intuitions to discern and describe the correspondences of taste in the subjects of your research.

11/27 THANKSGIVING

12/3 Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction*, Conclusion (20)

PP: Bourdieu writes that “*taste* … is social necessity made second nature.” How does this apply to your topic?

*12/6 Final Seminar Paper due by 10pm.* [NOTE: This is a Sunday]

Submit a paper of about 25 pages, incorporating the material from your literature review, any weekly papers that are relevant, as well as your continuing work on the project. These papers will be assembled into a physical magazine by Prof. Weston.

12/10 7 - 8pm Dessert of Distinction and Unveiling the *Centre Class Culture Journal* (Weston house)