

Social Class on Campus: Theories and Manifestations

Will Barratt



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This is at once a playful text with a serious purpose: to provide the reader with the theoretical lenses to analyze the dynamics of social class. It will appeal to students, and indeed anyone interested in how class mediates relationships in higher education, both because of its engaging tone, and because it uses the college campus as a microcosm for observing and analyzing the concept of class – and does so in a way that will prompt the reader to reflect on her or his location in the continuum of class, and understand how every member of the campus community helps co-construct social class.

Will Barratt starts from the premise that there is more than one way to study any idea; and that the more tools we use to examine a concept, the more fully we understand it in all its complexity and ambiguity. To illustrate salient features of class on campus, he introduces five fictional European-American women – Whitney Page, Louise, Misty, Ursula, and Eleanor – and also includes the real stories of students who represent a diversity of backgrounds.

Social class is often neglected or ignored as an important issue in the lives of students. The book provides the reader with a language for analyzing class, with theories of class that go beyond standard economic and sociological models, and examples of the manifestation of class – all toward the end of helping the reader have more agency in working with this difficult and challenging concept.

This book is suitable for students going to college for the first time, for courses exploring multicultural issues in contemporary society, and for anyone professionally involved with students. Each chapter includes a suggested experience and reflection questions to prompt readers to explore their thinking and feeling about class, as well as class discussion questions.

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