

Academic Script

Objectives:

- 1) To study the class, status and categories of social class.
- 2) To understand about the affluent consumers.
- 3) To study about the middle class.
- 4) To study and understand about the working class and non affluent consumers.

Introduction:

Social class (or, simply, class), as in class society, is a set of concepts in the [social sciences](#) and [political theory](#) centered on models of [social stratification](#) in which people are grouped into a set of [hierarchical](#) social categories, the most common being the upper, [middle](#), and [lower classes](#).

It is an essential object of analysis for [sociologists](#) , [political scientists](#) , [anthropologists](#) , and [social historians](#). However, there is not a consensus on the best definition of the "class," and the term has different contextual meanings. In common parlance, the term "social class" is usually synonymous with "[socio-economic](#) class," defined as "people having the same social, economic, or educational status," e.g., "the [working class](#)"; "an emerging professional class." However, academics distinguish social class and socioeconomic status, with the former referring to one's relatively stable sociocultural background and the latter referring to one's current social and economic situation and, consequently, being more changeable over time.

The precise measurements of what determines social class in society has varied over time. According to philosopher [Karl Marx](#), "class" is determined entirely by one's relationship to the [means of production](#) (their [relations of production](#)). The classes in modern capitalism, according to Marx, are the [proletariat](#), those who work but do not own the means of production; and the bourgeoisie, those who invest and live off of the surplus generated by the former. This contrasts with the view of the sociologist [Max](#)

[Weber](#), who argued "class" is determined by economic position, in contrast to "[social status](#)" or "Stand" which is determined by social prestige rather than simply just relations of production.

The term "class" is etymologically derived from the Latin *classis*, which was used by [census](#) takers to categorize citizens by wealth, in order to determine military service obligations.

In the late 18th century, the term "class" began to replace classifications such as [estates](#), [rank](#), and [orders](#) as the primary means of organizing society into hierarchical divisions. This corresponded to a general decrease in significance ascribed to hereditary characteristics, and increase in the significance of wealth and [income](#) as indicators of position in the social hierarchy.

Class, Status and Categories of Social Class:

Social class refers to a group of people with similar levels of wealth, influence, and status. Sociologists typically use three methods to determine social class:

- The objective method measures and analyzes "hard" facts.
- The subjective method asks people what they think of themselves.
- The reputational method asks what people think of others.

Results from these three research methods suggests that in the United States today approximately 15 to 20 percent are in the poor, lower class; 30 to 40 percent are in the working class; 40 to 50 percent are in the middle class; and 1 to 3 percent are in the rich upper class.

The lower class is typified by poverty, homelessness, and unemployment. People of this class, few of whom have finished high school, suffer from lack of medical care, adequate housing and food, decent clothing, safety, and vocational training. The media often stigmatize the lower class as "the underclass," inaccurately characterizing poor people as welfare mothers who abuse the system by having more and more babies,

welfare fathers who are able to work but do not, drug abusers, criminals, and societal “trash.”

The Upper Class:

Comprising only 1 to 3 percent of the United States population, the upper class holds more than 25 percent of the nation's wealth. This class divides into two groups: *lower-upper* and *upper-upper*. The lower-upper class includes those with “new money,” or money made from investments, business ventures, and so forth. The upper-upper class includes those aristocratic and “high-society” families with “old money” who have been rich for generations. These extremely wealthy people live off the income from their inherited riches. The upper-upper class is more prestigious than the lower-upper class.

Wherever their money comes from, both segments of the upper class are exceptionally rich. Both groups have more money than they could possibly spend, which leaves them with much leisure time for cultivating a variety of interests. They live in exclusive neighborhoods, gather at expensive social clubs, and send their children to the finest schools. As might be expected, they also exercise a great deal of influence and power both nationally and globally.

Affluent Consumer:

Affluent Households place more importance on friendship, leisure times, and hobbies. They seem to place less importance on money which is why they consume more domestic airline tickets, own more vehicles, hold more securities and spend more money on desktop, laptop and hand held computers as well as other electronic gadgetries. Members of the affluent class have incomes that provide them with disproportionately larger share of all discretionary income. The extras allow the purchase of:

- Luxury cruises
- Foreign sports cars
- Tourism resorts

- Fine jewelry

There seems to be a relationship between health and economic status. Healthiest people are those who are economically advantaged. Higher income and more highly educated people are less likely to die of heart disease, strokes, hepatitis, TB, cancers and other diseases of the sort. Affluent class seems to live longer and in better health than middle class. Middle class lives longer and in better health than individuals at the bottom.

Evidence suggests that children of the affluent may have problems with:

- Substance abuse
- Anxiety
- Depression

The above may be caused by excessive pressures to achieve as well as due to physical and psychological isolation from parents.

Middle Class

The middle class is a [class](#) of people in the middle of a social hierarchy. In [Weber's](#) socio-economic terms, the middle class is the broad group of people in contemporary society who fall socio-economically between the [working class](#) and [upper class](#). The common measures of what constitutes middle class vary significantly among cultures. A sizable and healthy middle-class can be viewed as a characteristic of a healthy society.

The middle class are the “sandwich” class. These **white collar workers** have more money than those below them on the “social ladder,” but less than those above them. They divide into two levels according to wealth, education, and prestige. The **lower middle class** is often made up of less educated people with lower incomes, such as managers, small business owners, teachers, and secretaries. The **upper**

middle class is often made up of highly educated business and professional people with high incomes, such as doctors, lawyers, stockbrokers, and CEOs.

The term "middle class" is first attested in James Bradshaw's 1745 pamphlet *Scheme to prevent running Irish Wools to France*. Another phrase used in [Early modern Europe](#) was "the middling sort".

The term "middle class" has had several, sometimes contradictory, meanings. It was once defined by exception as an intermediate [social class](#) between the [nobility](#) and the peasantry of [Europe](#). While the nobility owned the countryside, and the peasantry worked the countryside, a new [bourgeoisie](#) (literally "town-dwellers") arose around mercantile functions in the city. In France, the middle classes helped drive the [French Revolution](#). Another definition equated the middle class to the original meaning of capitalist: someone with so much [capital](#) that they could rival nobles. In fact, to be a capital-owning millionaire was the essential criterion of the middle class in the [industrial revolution](#).

Within capitalism, "middle class" initially referred to the [bourgeoisie](#) and the [petite bourgeoisie](#). However, with the impoverisation and [proletarianisation](#) of much of the *petit bourgeois* world, and the growth of [finance capitalism](#), "middle class" came to refer to the combination of the [labour aristocracy](#), the [professionals](#), and the [white collar workers](#).

The size of the middle class depends on how it is defined, whether by education, [wealth](#), environment of upbringing, [social network](#), manners or values, etc. These are all related, but are far from deterministically dependent. The factors are often ascribed in modern usage to a "middle class":

- Achievement of [tertiary education](#).
- Holding professional qualifications, including [academics](#), [lawyers](#), [chartered engineers](#), [politicians](#), and [doctors](#), regardless of leisure or wealth.
- Belief in [bourgeois](#) values, such as high rates of [house ownership](#), [delayed gratification](#), and jobs which are perceived to be [secure](#).

- Lifestyle In the United Kingdom, social status has historically been linked less directly to wealth than in the United States, and has also been judged by signifiers such as accent, manners, place of education, occupation, and the class of a person's family, circle of friends and acquaintances.
- Cultural identification. Often in the United States, the middle class are the most eager participants in [pop culture](#) whereas the reverse is true in Britain. The second generation of new [immigrants](#) will often enthusiastically forsake their traditional [folk culture](#) as a sign of having arrived in the middle class. In the United States by the end of the twentieth century, more people identified themselves as middle class than as lower or "working" class (with insignificant numbers identifying themselves as upper class). The British [Labour Party](#), which grew out of the organized labour movement and originally drew almost all of its support from the working class, reinvented itself under [Tony Blair](#) in the 1990s as "[New Labour](#)", a party competing with the [Conservative Party](#) for the votes of the middle class as well as the working class. By 2011, almost three quarters of British people were also found to identify themselves as middle class

The working class are those minimally educated people who engage in "manual labor" with little or no prestige. Unskilled workers in the class—dishwashers, cashiers, maids, and waitresses—usually are underpaid and have no opportunity for career advancement. They are often called the working poor. Skilled workers in this class—carpenters, plumbers, and electricians—are often called blue collar workers. They may make more money than workers in the middle class—secretaries, teachers, and computer technicians; however, their jobs are usually more physically taxing, and in some cases quite dangerous.

Although advertisers would prefer to show their products as part of an affluent lifestyle, blue collar or working class represents a vast group of consumers. Downscale consumers may actually be more brand loyal than wealthier customers because they cannot afford to make mistakes by switching into unfamiliar brands. A sensitive fact formarketers should

be that non affluent consumers often spend higher percentage of their available income on food than their middleclass consumers.

Summary:

In today's session we learnt about:

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