

**Sociology 125 - Class and Inequality**  
**Charles Varano**

**Time:** M-W-F 12:00-12:50pm.

**Room:** Amador Hall-250.

**Office Hours:** M-W-F 1:00-2:00pm.

**Room:** Amador Hall-454D, 278-6675.

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### Course Description

One of the most interesting yet distressing aspects of American society is how our belief in freedom and equality is contradicted daily by coercion and inequality. In a society that celebrates limitless opportunity and upward mobility Americans find themselves struggling in a class system that defies our efforts, turns dreams into nightmares, and leaves us wondering just what do we have to do to “make it?” In the past twenty five years this contradiction has become more acute as inequality and the antagonisms it fosters have grown.

In this course we will examine a core area in sociology, social stratification. We will consider the major theoretical perspectives on stratification with a special emphasis on social class, but we will also be concerned with how class intersects with racial and sex stratification. Rather than a dry course that presents only theories and statistics on who has how much of what, I have decided to “dress” theory and data with empirical case studies that analyze how real people live and struggle in a class society. My goal is not only to provide you with core materials in this area but also to cultivate a sensitivity and critical understanding that enables you to deal with these issues more thoughtfully and humanely in your own lives.

### Evaluation

There will be **three** exams (two midterms and a final). Each exam is worth 1/3 of your course grade and each will consist of an in-class section and take-home essay (**no more than 5** double-spaced (12-font) typewritten pages each). Make-up exams will be penalized one grade except for students with a doctor-verified medical reason.

### Texts

Blum, Linda. *Between Feminism and Labor: The Significance of the Comparable Worth Movement*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

Fantasia, Rick. *Cultures of Solidarity: Consciousness, Action, and Contemporary American Workers*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.

MacLeod, Jay. *Ain't No Makin' It: Aspirations and Attainment in a Low-Income Neighborhood*. Boulder, Colorado; Westview Press, 1995.

Newman, Katherine. *Declining Fortunes: The Withering of the American Dream*. New York; Basic Books, 1993.

Students will also be responsible for a collection of assigned articles that will be on reserve and any video materials presented in class. If you are having any trouble with the course, readings, or lectures, please see me immediately so we can work things out. I am available during office hours and by appointment, or you can E-mail me at the address noted above.

### Course Outline

**\*Denotes reading on reserve.**

**Week 1; Aug. 30 - Sept. 3.** Introduction to course.  
Functionalism: merit and power in stratification.

**Read:** \*Melvin Tumin “Some Principles of Stratification: A Critical Analysis,” in David B. Grusky (ed) *Social Stratification: Class, Race, and Gender in Sociological Perspective*. Boulder:Westview Press, 1994, pp. 47-54.

**Week 2; Sept. 8 - 10.** Conflict theories of class and inequality.

**Read:** \*Erik Olin Wright “What is Class?” in *Class Structure and Income Determination*, New York: Academic Press, 1979, pp. 3-18.

**Week 3; Sept. 13 - 17.** Inequality in an age of decline.

**Read:** Newman, *Declining Fortunes*, chapters 1-3.

**Week 4; Sept. 20 - 24.** Middle-class America on (the) edge.

**Read:** Newman, *Declining Fortunes*, chapters 5-8.

Documentary: “Living on the Fault line.”

**Week 5; Sept. 27 - Oct. 1.** Complete previous topic and review for midterm.

**Friday, October 1: Midterm Exam #1.**

**Week 6; Oct. 4 - 8.** Class and social reproduction. **Essay question due Monday, Oct.4**

**Read:** MacLeod, *Ain't No Makin' It*, chapters 1, 3-5.

**Week 7; Oct. 11 - 15.** Education and class.

**Read:** MacLeod, *Ain't No Makin' It*, chapters 2, 6-7.

**Week 8; Oct. 18 - 26.** The intersection of race and class.

**Read:** MacLeod, *Ain't No Makin' It*, chapters 9-11 and appendix.

**Week 9; Oct. 25 - 29.** The intersection of race and class.

**Read:** \*Patterson, Orlando. *The Ordeal of Integration: Progress and Resentment in America's "Racial" Crisis*. Washington, D.C.: Civitas, Counterpoint, 1997, pp.15-64.

Documentary, "Two Nations of Black America."

**Week 10; Nov. 1 - 5.** Complete previous topic and review for midterm.

**Wednesday, November 3: Midterm Exam #2.**

**Friday, November 5: Begin reading Blum, chapters 1-2.**

**Week 11; Nov. 8 - 12.** Gender and class: the struggle for gender equality at work.  
**Essay question due Monday, Nov. 8.**

**Read:** Blum, *Between Feminism and Labor*, chapters 3-4.

**Week 12; Nov. 15 - 19.** The limits and possibilities of the comparable worth movement.

**Read:** Blum, *Between Feminism and Labor*, chapters 5-7.

**Week 13; Nov. 22 - 24.** Class and class consciousness.

**Read:** Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity*, chapter 1.

**Week 14; Nov. 29 - Dec 3.** The structural limits to labor activism.

**Read:** Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity*, chapters 2-3.

**Week 15; Dec. 6 - 10.** Working class opposition.

**Read:** Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity*, chapters 4-6.

**Final Exam and Essay Question Due.**  
**Friday, December 17, 10:15am - 12:15pm.**  
**Room: Amador - 250.**