

DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS IN STUDY OF CLASSISM

Definitions

Class: Relative social rank in terms of income, wealth, education, occupational status, and/or power.

Classism: The institutional, cultural, and individual set of practices and beliefs that assign differential value to people according to their socioeconomic class; and an economic system that creates excessive inequality and causes basic human needs to go unmet.

Status: Social status can be understood as the degree of honor or prestige attached to one's position in society.

Class Indicator: A material or experiential factor that reflects an individual's class.

Class Continuum: The ranking of individuals or families in a society by income, wealth, education, occupational status, or power; the range of experiences out of which particular class identities are defined. Lines may be drawn at different points along this continuum, and labeled differently. Class is a relative thing, both subjectively and materially; our experience varies depending on whether we look up or down the continuum. However, it is clear that everyone at the top end is mostly advantaged, while everyone at the bottom end is mostly targeted. The following visually demonstrates this:

Targeted	Mostly Targeted	Mostly Advantaged	Advantaged
Poor	Working Class	Middle Class Owing Class	Ruling Class

Class Identity: One's predominant class experience, such as ruling class, owning class, middle class, working class, chronic poverty class.

Ruling Class: The stratum of people who hold positions of power in major institutions of the society.

Owning Class/Rich: The stratum of families who own income-producing assets sufficient to make paid employment unnecessary.

Upper-Middle Class: The portion of the middle class with higher incomes due to professional jobs and/or investment income.

Middle Class: The stratum of families for whom breadwinners' higher education and/ or specialized skills brings higher income and more security than working-class people have.

- Lower-Middle Class:** The portion of the middle class with lower and less stable incomes due to lower-skilled or unstable employment.
- Working Class:** The stratum of families whose income depends on hourly wages for labor, or on other non-managerial work or very small business activity that doesn't require higher education.
- Poverty Class:** The stratum of families with incomes persistently insufficient to meet basic human needs.
- Cultural Capital:** The forms of knowledge, skill, education, any advantages a person has that give her or him a higher status in society.
- Social Capital:** Resources based on group membership, relationships, networks of influence and support.
- Internalized Classism:** Acceptance and justification of classism by working-class and poor people, such as feelings of inferiority to higher-class people, hostility and blame toward other working-class or poor people, and beliefs that classist institutions/policies are fair are all examples of internalized subordination. Feelings of superiority to people lower on the class spectrum than oneself, a sense of entitlement, rationalizations of classist policies and institutions on the part of middle class and people on the upper end of the class spectrum are examples of internalized domination. Both internalized subordination and internalized dominance are manifestations of internalized classism.
- Class Privilege:** One of the many tangible or intangible unearned advantages of higher-class status, such as personal contacts with employers, good childhood health care, inherited money, speaking the same dialect and accent as people with institutional power.