

# CLASS

## purpose

- Scholars will examine their perceptions of class and social structures in the United States
- Scholars will discuss the role of class in students' lives both on individual and institutional levels.
- Scholars will examine the social and cultural dimensions of class in the United States.
- Scholars will explore how issues of class might play out in their campus community.

## outcomes

- Scholars will be able to articulate their perceptions of class structures.
- Scholars will be able to articulate their understanding of the individual and institutional impact of class structures in our society
- Scholars will identify the impact of class structures on their current lives
- Scholars will be able to articulate how issues of class might play out in their campus community

## simple agenda

- Warm-Up: Class Words Pictionary (15 min)
- Context (5 min)
- Exercise 1: Wealth Distribution (15 min)
- Exercise 2: Build a Community (45 min)
- Exercise 3: Stand (20 min)
- Closure (5 min)

*Total: 1 hour 40 min*

*Note to Trainer: This agenda is intended to provide a workshop for a [REDACTED] that will benefit from a focus on facts, data and the complexities class divisions.*

## alternate simple agenda

- Warm-up Alternatives: Free Association, Class Cards, Colored Class Cards (10 min)
- Exercise 1 Alternatives: Class Levels Collage, Class Levels Brainstorm (15 min)

## warm-up: class words pictionary

Play Pictionary using words that have something to do with class. See some examples below. Break the class up into two teams. Make sure that you end the game by letting Scholars observe the themes of each word and lead it into your context or your first exercise.

Sample words: *Debt, Middle Class, Poor, Rich, Wealthy, Upper Class, Low Class, Immigrant, CEO, Condo, Inheritance, White Collar, Trash, Sweatshop, Company, Educated, Ghetto, Politician, Blue Collar, Diamond, Wealth, Welfare, SUV, Union, Social Security, Lottery, Discount, Trump, Inner-City, Scholarship, College, Stock Market, Middle Class, Suburbia, Urban, Salary, 401k, etc.*

## context

**suggested statement:** “Today we are going to be discussing class. As you experienced during the warm-up there are a lot of words and terms that can be related to class. But often, we don’t get to talk about class in a focused way. Some people say that class is invisible. You can’t always tell a person’s economic or social status just by looking at them. Today, we’ll try and talk about the different facets about class—perceptions, assumptions, definitions, and explore their effect on society and how class plays a role in your personal experience.”

## exercise 1: build a community

10. Split the class into three groups and seat them in different areas of the room. Give each group a package, an instruction sheet, and a budget. Explain the following instructions:
11. Each group has 15 minutes to build a community. You must consider all of the elements that are essential to creating a successful community including education, health care, security, safety, recreation, and residential space, etc.
12. Each group has a budget and a list of buildings and their costs. You can buy these buildings for the community, but you must stay within your budget, you can only use the materials provided, and you must remember to include what you think are the most important elements of a community.
13. After 15 minutes, each group will present its community and explain how they made their decisions.

*Note to trainers: While the students are building their communities, trainers must observe their reactions and take note of any frustrations, statements, or interesting ideas. Trainers should also be aware of when and if the students discover the differences in resources. Some groups may decide to share supplies, some may become very possessive, some may be very angry, and some may feel guilty.*

## BUILD YOUR OWN COMMUNITY

Your task is to build an effective community in which YOU will live, work, and raise a family. Inside this packet, you will find a list of buildings and their price of construction, a budget, and supplies. With your group, carefully design your community. Remember to consider places to live, safety, access to education, recreational resources, etc. Remember to work within your budget. You must work and make decisions together to create an EFFECTIVE community using all of your resources. Remember this is YOUR community.

### COMMUNITY BUILDING LISTS

BUILDINGS	COST
Condominiums	\$1000
Houses	\$600
Apartment Buildings	\$200
Empty Lot	\$20
Parking lot	\$150
Supermarket	\$700
Corner Stores	\$250
Factories	\$400
Office Buildings	\$1000
Museum	\$750
Park	\$800
Playground	\$200
Shopping Mall	\$1000
Library	\$500
Hospital	\$900
Health Clinic	\$250
Middle School	\$500
High School	\$625
Community College	\$900
University	\$1500
Police Station	\$350
Prison	\$400
Country Club	\$975
<b>YOUR BUDGET:</b>	<b>\$15,000</b>

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Playground	\$200
Shopping Mall	\$1000
Library	\$500
Hospital	\$900
Health Clinic	\$250
Middle School	\$500
High School	\$625
Community College	\$900
University	\$1500
Police Station	\$350
Prison	\$400
Country Club	\$975
<b>YOUR BUDGET:</b>	<b>\$5,000</b>

## COMMUNITY BUILDING LISTS

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Library	\$500
Hospital	\$900
Health Clinic	\$250
Middle School	\$500
High School	\$625
Community College	\$900
University	\$1500
Police Station	\$350
Prison	\$400
Country Club	\$975
 YOUR BUDGET:	 \$1,000

*During the process, trainers should point out the behaviors they noticed and ask the group to dissect how their actions parallel the real world.*

### **process**

1. How did you feel while presenting your community?
2. Did you know other groups had different levels of supplies?
3. When you realized what other groups had, how did you feel? Why?
4. How does this activity reflect society?
5. Do you know real communities like these? What do you notice about them?
6. How do these issues affect you personally,? In your school or in your neighborhood?
7. Some people say the United States is a meritocracy. Can someone explain what a meritocracy is? [Meritocracy: a system in which advancement is a reward based on individual ability or achievement] Do you think the US is a meritocracy? Why or why not? Why or why not? What, if any, are the barriers to mobility in this country?
8. How do you think issues of class will play out on your college/university campus?
9. Where do you think people in a college campus community get their messages about class?

## **exercise 2: wealth distribution activity**

(from Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice by Adams, Bell, Griffin)

1. Begin by asking Scholars to define wealth.
2. Share the following definition from merriam-webster.com:
3. 1: abundance of valuable material possessions or resources  
2: abundant supply : profusion  
3 a : all property that has a money value or an exchangeable value b : all material objects that have economic utility; especially : the stock of useful goods having economic value in existence at any one time
4. Set up ten chairs without armrests in a line. To illustrate how wealth is distributed in this country, ask for ten volunteers to stand in front of each of the ten chairs. Note that in this demonstration each person represents one-tenth of the United States population and each chair represents one-tenth of all the private wealth in the United States.
5. Explain: In 1976, the top 10 percent owned half of all the private wealth and the bottom 90 percent owned half of all the private wealth. So ask the person representing the “top 10 percent”

to lay across five of the chairs; and the other nine people to scrunch into the remaining five chairs. Encourage them to make sure all are sitting.

6. Look at the present. There has been a dramatic shift in wealth. Now the top 10 percent owns 80 percent of all private wealth (or eight chairs) and the remaining nine must share two chairs. Urge the top 10 percent person to extend out over the additional chairs while you evict the occupants and ask them to scrunch onto the remaining two with everyone else.
7. As with income distribution, there is a broad range within the top 10 percent when it comes to distribution of wealth. Have the arm of the person who is the “top 10 percent” equal the wealthiest 1 percent of the population. The top 1 percent owns over 40 percent of the wealth, so this arm’s share is now equal to four chairs. The top 1 percent now owns more wealth than the bottom 90 percent combined (4 chairs for the top 1 percent and 3 chairs for the bottom 90 percent).

*Note to trainers: In order to be respectful of Scholars’ personal physical space, you may want to consider using an optional version of this activity. Instead of using chairs, consider using chocolate bars or candy to represent the percentages in the activity. Use a chocolate bar and/or candy to show the physical manifestation of these statistics. Each square of chocolate/piece of candy represents 10% of U.S. wealth and will be distributed according to the data. If you choose to use chocolate/candy, follow the format below:*

1. Explain that each Scholar represents 10% of the U.S. population and each piece of candy represents 10% of U.S. wealth. Start from the bottom.
2. State that “80% of the population owns 7% of the wealth,” which means 8 Scholars should group together to share 0.7 pieces of chocolate/candy.
3. Next, state that “the next roughly 20% of the population owns 90% of wealth.” This means 2 Scholars will share about 9.2 pieces of chocolate/candy.
4. Finally, explain “the top 1% of people own 40 % of the wealth.” The other trainer can represent the elite and take about 4 pieces of chocolate/candy. Point out that only 20% of people own a remarkable 90 of U.S. wealth.
5. Lastly, you might share one last note from the author of the study from which these figures were taken. In “Wealth, Income, and Power,” G. William Domhoff states that “Since financial wealth is what counts as far as the control of income-producing assets, we can say that just 10% of the people own the United States of America.”

## process

1. What do you think about this activity?

2. How does any of this information shape or change the way you think/feel about the idea of meritocracy?
3. Does the world need poverty in order to function (wealthy/poor)? Explain.
4. Does your economic status affect what you or your parents want you to major in or to make your career?
5. How does this knowledge make you feel?

### exercise 3: stand

You can run this activity towards the end of the class workshop to have it strike a more personal chord with the Scholars by running a modified version of Stand/Cross the Line. Preface the activity by talking about how it is a personal reflection activity related to the workshop on class today. With eyes closed, either standing, raising hands format, or crossing the line, each student has to respond to the following statements:

- If you have ever been judged because of your clothing
- If you are the first to go to college in your family
- If you have ever had two or more jobs at one time
- If you own a car
- If your family owns a house
- If your family has ever received public assistance
- If you went to private school
- If you felt safe in the neighborhood where you grew up
- If you have a bank account
- If you have ever received a Scholarship
- If you've traveled overseas
- If you have ever skipped a meal because you did not have enough money
- If you have ever shopped with food stamps or a link card
- If you feel like your class status changed during the course of your lifetime
- If you have a credit card your parents pay for
- If you consider your family low income



- If you consider your family middle income
- If you consider your family high income
- If you have ever taken private dance/sports/music lessons
- If you are worried about how you will pay for college
- If your family's class status changed upon immigrating to the United States
- If you own stock

### process

- What are some general reactions to this activity?
- What did it feel like to stand/sit for certain statements?
- What are some statements that we left out?
- Have you ever talked [redacted] about class or your own class differences? Why or why not? "Have issues of class started to play a role [redacted]? How and Why?"
- Is there any guilt or shame associated with class? Why/Why not?
- What are different class issues that you think you'll encounter at your college?
- How might class differences affect your [redacted]?

### closure

Be sure to hit the following points:

- Class is not an easy topic to tackle. There are a lot of feelings associated with class and for many people it is a very touchy subject.
- But watching this group talk about class in such a mature and open way today reassures us that when this [redacted] hits campus, you will be able to handle any issue that comes up with skill and intelligence.

## alternate warm-ups, exercises & activities

### alternate warm-up: free association with class cards

This warm up is most effective if used before setting the context so that students discover for themselves the topic of the workshop. Prepare sets of cards, enough for each dyad [redacted] to have a set. These cards will have words related to class, privilege, and socio-economic structure on them (see list in pictorial warm-up above).

1. Split the group into dyads, give each student half of the set of cards, and explain free association, for example: “Does anyone know what free association is? It’s a tool used by psychologists to reflect a person’s subconscious thoughts.
2. Pick a reader and a responder.
3. The reader will read her cards to the responder one at a time. The responder has to say what comes to mind when she hears that word, even if she doesn’t know what it means or what she’s thinking is totally unrelated. Try to do this as quickly as possible.
4. Explain: “When I say switch, you will switch roles.

#### process

- Were there common themes in your answers?
- Were the words related to one another? How?
- What do you think was the common theme?
- Would the associations you made be different depending on where you are or how you grew up?

### alternate warm-up: colored class cards

This warm-up serves as a check-in around Scholars’ initial perceptions and assumptions of class. It helps give everyone an opening framework for later discussions on class.

- Give each [redacted] Scholar three different colored strips of paper (it can be index cards, or post-its) and give them a few seconds to write down what they think the average income is for lower class, middle class, and high class individuals.
- Assign the colors to the class levels; i.e. red is low class, yellow middle class, and blue high class. Then have the Scholars mix the cards up and put up all the answers on a wall.
- Read aloud the answers and generate discussion around the responses to the exercise.

#### process

- What does this tell you about how we perceive class?
- Why is it important to look at how we perceive class?
- What happens when our perceptions are inconsistent with others?

### alternate exercise 1: class levels collage

This activity will provide the [redacted] with the opportunity to explore ideas, images and the perceptions they have about class.

1. Post three sheets of newsprint on a wall labeled "Upper Class," "Middle Class," and "Lower Class." Bring the [redacted] together in front of them.
2. Explain that regardless of our personal views about class, we are surrounded by images, attitudes, and values that send messages and shape our ideas about class, status, and privilege in our society. Now the [redacted] is going to spend some time examining these ideas and images.
3. Distribute to each Scholar 5-8 pieces of cardstock with printed images, words, symbols, income amounts, etc. Allow about five minutes for them to all tape their sheets to one of the three class level newsprints. Scholars should place the sheets in the categories in which they feel they belong. All Scholars should work at the same time. Reconvene, step back, and allow a couple of minutes to observe which items ended up in each level.

### process

- What do you notice about these collages? What stands out/surprises you?
- Did you feel conflicted about where to put any of your sheets?
- Do you disagree with where any of these words or images were placed?
- Are attitudes about each class different? (Be sure to highlight positive and negative attitudes in each class level).
- At what point in our lives do you think we start making these class distinctions?
- What do you think about the terms "lower," "middle," and "upper"? Why do you think we decided to use them for this exercise?
- Is each class well-defined? Are boundaries between them rigid?
- How do you foresee your perceptions about class changing in the future?
- Why do you think a discussion about these issues would be important on campus?

### alternate exercise 1: class levels collage brainstorm

This activity is similar to the collage activity above, however, here the Scholars will be able to first brainstorm and create their own list of ideas, images and perceptions.

- Post newsprint. Write at the top - upper class, middle class, or lower class.
- Divide the [redacted] into three with each group at one of the brainstorm sheets.

**suggested statement:** Regardless of our personal views about class, we are surrounded with images, attitudes, and values that send messages and shape our ideas about class, status, and privilege in our

society. Now the [redacted] is going to spend some time examining these ideas and images. Ask the students to write any and all of the words, symbols, and images that these categories remind them of. Remind them that they are simply writing what they have heard, not necessarily what they personally believe.

### process

- What do you notice about your lists?
- Are the attitudes about each class different? Why?
- What do you think about the term “lower” class? Why would we decide to use it for this exercise? What effect do definitions have on how we understand class differences?
- What might this activity say about the idea of meritocracy?
- Why do you think a discussion about these issues would be important on campus?

### alternate exercise 2: “city hall”

Some insight from a [redacted] trainer: *“This activity worked really well. Group 1 tended to enjoy their privilege and perpetuated the ways in which we were treating the other groups. It got people riled up and much more involved in the activity and I think they had a lot of fun with it. During the process it was easy for us to connect this activity to the real world, even though the activity is an extreme.”* – Emma Sellers, [redacted] Boston trainer.

You will need extra staff to help play the role of the “police” and “city hall officials”


- Divide the [redacted] into three groups. Group 1 has 2 people, group 2 has three people, and group 3 has 5 people. (Modify this depending on your [redacted] size)
- Each group has a taped off area within which they could move. They cannot step outside of that area. Group 1 has the largest amount of space, group 2 has a decent amount of space, and group 3 has hardly enough space to fit all five people comfortably.
- In order to build their community, each group has to obtain a permit from “City Hall”. Each group has different instructions as to when and how they could go to city hall. Group 1 can go whenever want without permission. Group 2 has to ask for permission before leaving their area and Group 3 has to ask permission and get an escort to go to city hall.

- City hall officials treat each group differently. Choose random times to “close” city hall if someone from groups 2 or 3 tries to get a permit. People from group 1 are always taken first, even if those from other groups are waiting in line. Make fake money and check if it’s “counterfeit” and count everything twice to make sure group 3 is paying correctly. Basically treat group 1 like gold, group two with respect, and group 3 do not treat well.
- Have “police officers” so that if anyone steps out of their community without permission or creates a “problem” they are sent to jail. You will notice that mostly group 3 members end up in jail. Their group can bail them out for 50 dollars and if they display “good behavior”.
- Both city hall and the police officers tell groups one and two not to associate with group three since they are “dangerous” and are a bad influence. Sometimes ignore group 3 when they are trying to get an escort to city hall or ask a question. Reward some people from group three” and move them “up” into group 2.

### process

1. What was it like to be a part of Group 1, 2, or 3?
2. How did you feel when people treated you in a certain way?
3. How did it feel to represent the police officers? The City Hall officials? What does this activity say about the real world? Is it realistic?
4. Do things like this really happen?
5. What are some stereotypes of different social classes? What is your personal experience with these stereotypes?
6. If you changed classes, what was that like for you?
7. The upper class often does not help the lower class. If so: Why didn’t you help them? What pressures were you under?

### alternate exercise 2: “runway”

This activity is similar to ‘Build a Community’ but within a different context. You might use this activity if your  will have more buy-in because is it ‘lighter’ and has the fun element of a fashion show.

Have a Fashion Show:

1. Divide the group into three smaller teams.

2. For the next 10 minutes each team pretends they are top fashion designers selling their “most fabulous” design for a fashion show to win a million dollar contract.
3. The supplies you give each team will be unequal. One group will get the most materials, the second group will receive some materials, and the last group will receive the barest of supplies. Don’t explicitly tell the [REDACTED] this, and have them discover as the activity goes along.
4. After the fashion show, have the judge (staff or trainers) pick the winner. Then process the activity immediately.

### process

- How did you feel while presenting your fashion show?
- Did you know other groups had different levels of supplies?
- When you realized what other groups had, how did you feel? Why?
- How does this activity reflect society?
- How do these issues affect you personally,? In your school or in your neighborhood?
- Some people say the United States is a meritocracy. Can someone explain what a meritocracy is? [Meritocracy: a system in which advancement is a reward based on individual ability or achievement] Do you think the US is a meritocracy? Why or why not? Why or why not? What, if any, are the barriers to mobility in this country?
- How do you think issues of class will play out on your college/university campus?
- Where do you think people in a college campus community get their messages about class?

### alternate exercise 3: rotating dyads

1. Set up two equal rows of chairs facing each other.
2. Have the Scholars sit on each chair so that dyads are face to face.
3. Run the activity like Microlab, where you will make a statement and ask each person to take turns answering the question.
4. After both Scholars have spoken, yell “rotate” and make the group get up and rotate in one direction so that they are facing a new person for a new question.

### Rotating Dyad Questions

- Talk about a time when you first noticed class differences.

- Do you feel like your class status has changed during the course of your lifetime?
- Are there class differences amongst your family?
- Does class affect your social life? Explain.
- Will going to college affect your class status?
- Have you ever felt guilty or ashamed because of your class?
- Do you think class affects men and women differently? Why or why not?
- Did your class status have an effect on your high school experience? Do you think it will affect your college experience? Explain.
- What are some privileges you've enjoyed because of your class status?
- If your class status changed, would your friends and family treat you differently? Explain.

### process

- What are some general reactions to this activity?
- What did it feel like to talk about issues of class?
- How might class differences affect your [REDACTED]?
- Have you ever talked amongst your [REDACTED] about class or your own class differences? Why or why not? "Have issues of class started to play a role in this [REDACTED]? How and Why?"
- What are different class issues that you think you'll encounter at your college?

### debrief

- What evidence do you have that the outcomes were achieved?
- If the outcomes were not met, how will you follow up?
- If you made modifications to this workshop, were they successful?
- How was your co-facilitation and what can you do to make it stronger?
- Were the expectations between the [REDACTED] and Staff and the expectations amongst the [REDACTED] met?
- Do you believe issues around class are impacting this [REDACTED] in negative ways? If so, how do you intend to address it with the [REDACTED]?

- Exercise 2 Alternatives: City Hall, Runway (45 min)
- Exercise 3 Alternatives: Rotating Dyads (20 min)
- Closure (5 min)

*Total: 1 hour 35 min*

*Note to Trainer: This agenda is intended to provide a workshop with a focus on more time for Scholars and the [redacted] to explore their assumptions about issues of class.*

## materials

- color Posterboard
- white Posterboard
- markers
- crayons
- glitter glue
- tape
- stapler
- glue
- pens
- scissors
- special paper
- stickers
- construction paper
- one torn piece of newsprint
- pencil
- one permanent marker
- hole puncher or other unusable element
- include hand out for build a community (see below)



## preparation

For Pictionary Warm-Up: Choose in advance the terms you will use for the Pictionary warm-up. Consider using terms that will be familiar, intriguing, challenging and conducive for dialogue for this particular Posse.

For the Wealth Distribution Activity: Spend some time familiarizing yourself with the article that provided the data and wealth distribution percentages for the U.S. Go to <http://sociology.ucsc.edu/whorulesamerica/power/wealth.html> for more information and insight that will help you when processing the activities and content with Scholars.

For Stand: Be sure to leave ample time to process this [redacted] staple activity.

For Build a Community: Prepare three bags of art supplies and include instructions and budget sheets in each. Each bag will have a different quality and quantity of art supplies, as well as a different budget. Each will have supplies and a budget that reflect different levels of access to resources.

Bag 1: colored Posterboard, markers, crayons, glitter glue, tape, stapler, glue, pens, scissors, special paper, stickers

Bag 2: a piece of white Posterboard, pack of markers, one pen, tape, one piece of construction paper.

Bag 3: one torn piece of newsprint, pencil, one permanent marker, hole puncher or other unusable element.

The supplies should be packaged in similar looking bags so that students are not aware of the unequal resources the beginning of the activity.

## insight

There are a lot of potential combinations of warm-ups and exercises for this workshop. For example, you might use the Wealth Distribution Activity as a warm-up because it's quick, engaging, and helps stimulate discussions later on about socioeconomic disparities. If you choose to run Stand, make sure you allow for enough time to process the activity.

You can choose to sequence the activities with the martini glass concept. You start the workshop with a discussion that hits Class at a global/national level, then move to a community level, and then to the personal level, and finally move the dialogue towards campus.