

## Paul Fussell's Definitions of Nine Social Classes:

**Fussell's definition of *class*, generally:** "By class, I mean all three [Weber's class, status and party], with perhaps extra emphasis on *status*."

**Regarding class categories, generally:** "of course no one person is located within one of these categories exclusively."

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**Top Out-of-Sight Class:** lives on inherited capital entirely...no one whose money comes solely from his own work can be a member of this class (29). The Top-Out-of-Sight class is essentially invisible to others in the social class system because they hide away from social class envy, revenge and expose journalism. This wasn't always so, but has largely been so since the depression. They also share many qualities with their opposite, the bottom-out-of-sight, namely: equally invisible; they do not earn their money; carry very little cash on their person (30-31).

**Upper Class:** (Page 31): differs from top-out-of-sights in two main ways: 1) inherits money, but also earns quite a bit, too. 2) is visible, often ostentatiously so. It's stigmata is that it is in the *social register*. Consider it rude to make compliments, as their homes and things are "without question" (32). Own horses (though this is not clear...the upper-middles do this, too). Impervious to ideas and a lack of interest in them...they are generally unoriginal (33).

**Upper Middle Class:** It may possess virtually as much as the two classes above it, the difference is that it has earned most of it in law, medicine, oil, shipping, real estate or even the more honorific kinds of trade like buying and selling works of art... The upper middles suffer from a bourgeois sense of shame, a conviction to live on the earnings of others, even forebears, is not quite nice (pg. 33). Chastity in sexual display. Most role-reversed in terms of gender roles: men think nothing of doing housework, women often work outside the home. Like to show off their educations. Being in the upper-middle class is a familiar and credible fantasy, thus it is the most desired class in America (34). "The goal is for everyone to look upper-middle class because upper-middle class equals Success" (34). Tend to have controlled, precise movements (35). It's all a game with the upper-middle class (36).

**Middle Class:** Values work and education, as well as money (16). "The middle class is distinguishable more by its earnestness and psychic insecurity than by its middle income" (39). Members are often insecure about their class, but tend to take pride in their work. The middle class offers social safety because they aren't associated with pride, snobbery or wastefulness like upper classes or with the shame and restrictions of the lower classes, but they are still scared of criticism (p26 and 39). The middle class is always anxious about offending (39). "They're also the people who do most of the moving long-distance (generally to very unstylish places), commanded every few years to pull up stakes by the corporations they're in bondage to" (40). "Virtually no latitude is permitted to individuality or the milder forms of eccentricity" (40). "The desire to belong, and to belong by some mechanical act like purchasing something, is another sign of the middle class" (41). "Being naturally innocent and well-disposed and aboveboard, a member of the middle class finds it hard to believe that all are not" (42).

**The High Prole Class** The difference between the lower middle class (which doesn't exist any more) and the High Prole class is a further lack of freedom and self-respect. They are the skilled workers and craftsmen who have pride in their professions and status, but fear the "reduction of status," (45). LeMasters calls them "Blue-Collar Aristocrats" (46).

**Mid-Prole:** “It’s down among the mid- and low proles that features some might find offensive begin to show themselves. These are people who feel bitter about their work, often because they are closely supervised and regulated and generally treated like wayward children” (47). A member of this class provides service for other individuals and is constantly supervised. Continues to perform tasks with the fear that one day they may lose their job, playing the role of a victim. Mid-proletarians are people who fall two class levels below middle class. They do not work at high paying jobs, but still engage in leisurely activities. These are people whose servitude is constantly emphasized but work in “operator” positions, such as a bus driver. Mid-proles often engage in private pursuits

**Low-Prole:** tightly supervised and controlled at work. “Occupational class depends very largely on doing work for which the consequences of error or failure distant or remote, or better, invisible, rather than immediately apparent to a supervisor and thus instantly humiliating to the performer” (48). “Constantly demeaned at work, the lower sorts of proles suffer from poor morale” (48). “There’s a prole tendency to express class disappointment by self-simplification” (48). Tend to retreat into private pursuits when not at work: hobbies, playing poker, watching and identifying with sports teams, camping, etc. “At the bottom of the working class, the low prole is identifiable by the gross uncertainty of his employment...social isolation is the norm here...” (49).

**Destitute:** “never have even seasonal work and who live wholly on welfare. They differ from the bottom-out-of-sights less because they’re more visible, in the form of Bowery bums, bag ladies, people who stand in public places lecturing and delivering harangues about their grievances, people who drink out of paper bags, people whose need for some recognition impels them to “act” in front of audiences in the street.” (49-50).

**Bottom Out-of-Sight:** “When delinquency and distress grow desperate, you sink into the bottom-out-of-sight class, staying all day in your welfare room or contriving to get taken into an institution, whether charitable or correctional doesn’t matter much” (50).