

CLASS IN AMERICA: AMERICA AT WAR WITH ITSELF?

Coordinators: Arlynn Brody and Stephen Kalinsky

We envision America as a place where anyone who works hard can get ahead, where no one is stuck in their economic class. Has that vision been achieved? Have we become a nation of multiple classes at war with each other? And if so, how did it happen and how has it manifested? Have working class Americans given up on liberalism? Is the American Dream dead? Have the culture wars revived? Is there a real disconnect between the haves and the have-nots? Do Americans vote consistent with or in opposition to their own self-interests? Additional questions such as how people feel about themselves, their government, their future prospects and their voting patterns will also be looked at.

Readings and other Required Materials:

1. Joe Bagent; Three Rivers Press; *Deer Hunting With Jesus: Dispatches From America's Class War*; 2007
2. *Requiem for the American Dream*; A film by Noam Chomsky, 2015 (Available on Netflix and other streaming services)
3. A course pack consisting of articles and studies from sources which may include The New York Review of Books, Salon, The New York Times, The Atlantic, The Brookings Institution, The Heritage Foundation, The Pew Research Center and others. The approximate cost will be \$10-20.

Arlynn Brody is a retired NYC School Principal. This will be her maiden voyage as a study group coordinator. **Steven Kalinsky**, an attorney whose undergraduate major was Political Science, has coordinated study groups on various topics including Saul Bellow, Chekhov and Charlie Chaplin. This is serious.

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Week 1: Inside the Working Poor in the U.S.
“Deer Hunting” Introduction and Chapter 1 (Pages 1-49); Course Pack: Excerpts from The other America by Michael Harrington and a NY Times Article: Shadowy Lines that Still Divide. Questions to be

considered- What are some of the defining characteristics of the working poor in the US? How does this differ from America's 'other' working classes? How does the working poor define capitalism, corporations and big business?

Week 2: Attitudes: Pride and Fear

“Deer Hunting” Chapter 2 (51-96)

Articles of the Course Pack (TBD)

Questions: Is there a difference in the attitudes towards pride and fear in social classes in America? Why are these attitudes contradictory? How have these attitudes influenced America's feelings about 'personal responsibility and government'?

Week 3: Economic Crisis: Rise and Fall of Trade Unions

Watch “Requiem for the American Dream” (at home) Course Pack: Kicked out In America, NY Review of Books

Week 4: Economic Crisis Continued: Income Diversity, Mortgage Racket

“Deer Hunting” Chapter 3 (97-115) Course Pack: TBD

Questions for weeks 3 & 4: How have the trade unions defined social classes in the US? What is happening now and why? The mortgage racket...how did 2008 define social inequality in the US? Discussion of Noah Chomsky's film on 'Economics' in the US today. What other factors are causing the Great Economic Divide in the US?

Week 5: Religion

“Deer Hunting” Chapters 5-6 (159-193) Course Pack: TBD

Questions: Is there a struggle between Democracy and Theocracy within the US? Where are the working poor in terms of religion? The Rich? The Middle Class?

Week 6: Race

Course Pack: The Real Reason the Republican Party is Imploding, Salon; Death of the Reagan Revolution, Salon

Questions: What's it like to be White, Black, Hispanic and poor in the US? How does race effect attitudes towards government? Religion? Where are we headed? The Republican or Democratic Party? Does defining race (e.g on a census) create equal employment opportunities?

Week 7: Education

Course Pack: TBD

Questions: Is there a difference in education throughout America based on class? What effect does this have on attitudes, economics, religion and race?

Week 8: Health Care

Course Pack: TBD

Questions: Do rich Americans get better health care than poor Americans? Are rich people healthier than poor people in the US? What has happened to Obamacare in different parts of the country? Why?

Week 9: Justice and the Law

Course Pack: TBD

Questions: Is the death penalty disproportionately imposed on the poor? How do attitudes towards the law differ for the rich, middle class or poor?

Week 10: The Media

Course Pack: TBD

Questions: How does the media work to influence the attitudes of the poor, middle class and rich? Election 2016...what role has the media played in forming the candidates? How has this worked or not worked in different areas of the country?

Weeks 11 and 12: Class and the 2016 Election

Readings will be sent by email by the coordinators

Questions: How has 'class' defined the vote in the US? Let's analyze it state by state based on our past discussions and readings. Where to we go from here?