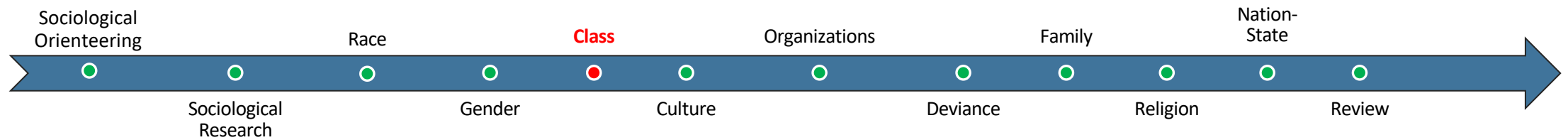
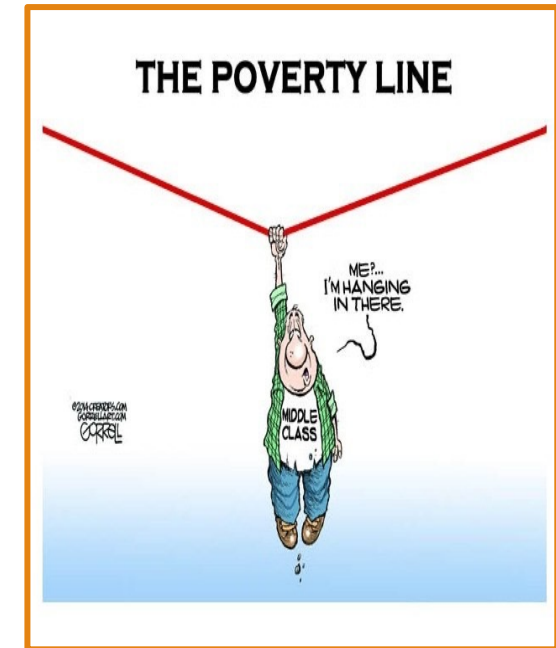


# WEEK 5

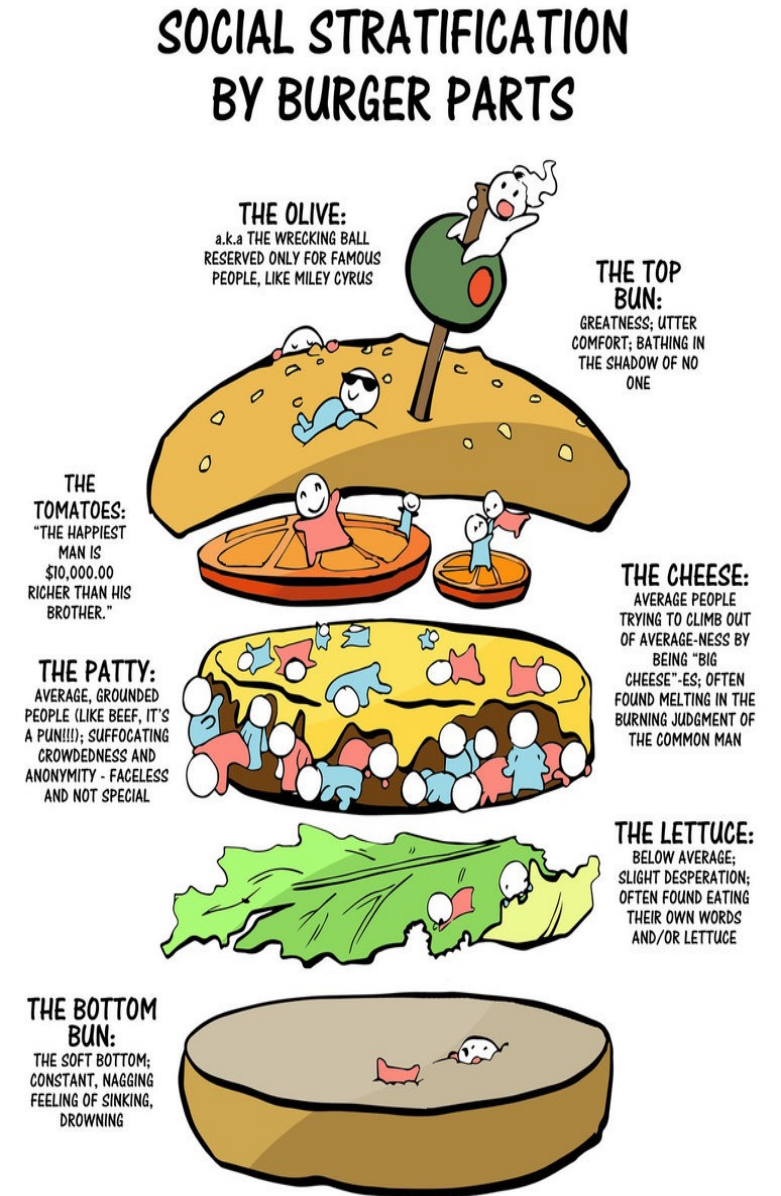
## Class and Social Inequality

Dr Lou Antolihao  
SC1101E Making Sense of Society



# Social Stratification

- ❑ The systematic process of ranking people on a scale of social worth such that the ranking affects life chances in unequal ways.
- ❑ Four Basic Systems of Stratification
  1. Servitude (slavery, extreme inequality)
  2. Caste (**ascribed social status**)
  3. Estate (feudalism)
  4. **CLASS** (**achieved status**, life chances)
    - Upper Class - wealthy people, industrialists, executives
    - Middle Class - white-collar workers and professionals
    - Lower Class - blue-collar workers, manual jobs



# Modernity and the Class System

images here is to focus on hands - what work you do with your hands (determining



## □ Characteristics of a Class System

- Economic differences between groups and individual.
- Not completely ascribed status.
- Class system is meritocratic.
- System provides upward & downward mobility.

## □ Measuring Class: **occupation** (income) is the most useful factor in individual's class standing in terms of life chances and material comfort. People in the same occupation have more or less similar experiences, advantages and disadvantages.

# Social Class in Singapore

	Class % (Income)	Class % (Subjective)
Upper	1	1
Upper Middle	4	5
Middle Middle	11	48
Lower Middle	30	33
Upper Lower	33	10
Lower	21	4

Source: Tan, *Class & Social Orientations*, 2015.

❑ What is the reason for the discrepancy between the income and self-evaluation measurements of class in Singapore?

- a. People tend to overestimate themselves.
- b. People are ashamed to reveal their real status.
- c. They can afford to buy their basic needs.
- d. They live in a relatively well-off country.

# Class, Inequality, and Poverty

---

- ❑ **Social inequality** – the disparities in the allocation of economic assets and opportunities that affect an individual's overall quality of life.
  - Wealth – economic possessions
  - Prestige – respect, regard, recognition
  - Power – ability to influence others
- ❑ Poverty – **capability deprivation** (Amartya Sen)
  - absolute poverty – cannot provide for basic necessities
  - relative poverty – can afford basic needs but unable to maintain an average standard of living



# Class and Mobility

---

❑ **Social Mobility** – movement from one class category to another.

- intragenerational – changes in a person's class position within her lifetime.
- intergenerational – changes in class position of the children in comparison to their parents.

➤ upward or downward mobility

❑ **Factors Affecting Social Mobility**

- **Personal compass** – work ethic, attitude, dispositions, integrity, **delaying gratification**, guiding principles.
- **Cultural map** – education, inherited position, inheritance, safety net, social network, discrimination (race, gender, class, etc.)
- **Social terrain** – place of residence (country, locality), economic and political landscape, **meritocracy** (advancement based on ability and merit, not wealth or influence)





# Social Mobility in Singapore

---

## ❑ The Five Cs

- 1) Cash, 2) Credit Card, 3) Car, 4) Condo, 5) Country Club
- Symbols of economic success, the equivalent to “The American Dream”.

## ❑ Meritocracy as one of the key governing ideologies in Singapore.

## ❑ **ENGAGING SOCIETY: What does it take to get rich in Singapore/your home country?**

- a. ability
- b. education
- c. hard work
- d. luck
- e. right connection



# How wide is the class divide in Singapore?

---



[https://youtu.be/YNuIR\\_ikYBY](https://youtu.be/YNuIR_ikYBY)



# Understanding Class Inequality

## □ Functionalist Approaches

- inequality ensures that the best-qualified people fill the most important occupations (Davis and Moore 1985, Toh 2018).

## □ Conflict Approaches

- some positions command large salaries and bring other valued rewards even though their contributions to society are questionable. (the rise & fall of the professional-managerial class)

## □ Interactionist Approaches

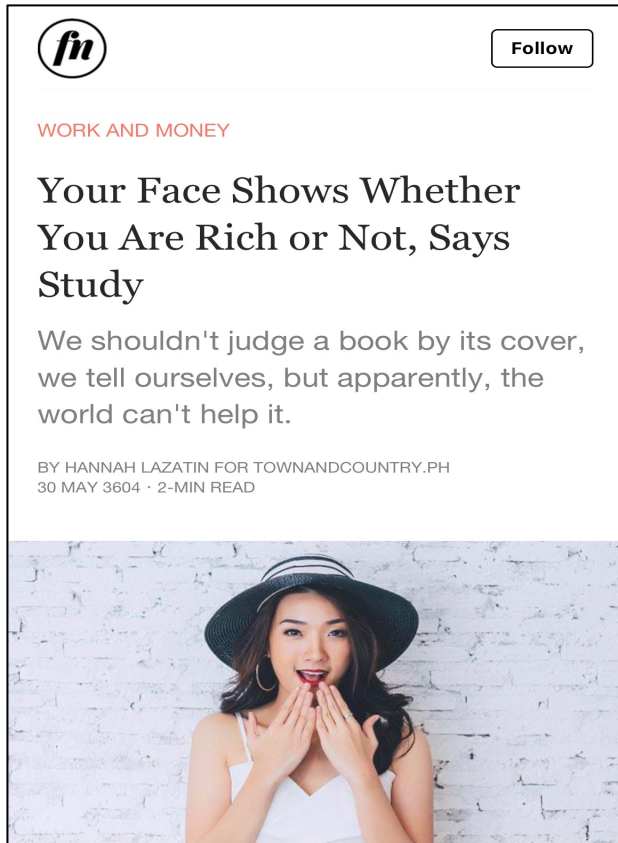
- inequality shapes interaction and awareness of one's superior or inferior position relative to others (e.g., cultural omnivorousness).

## □ Reorientationist Approaches

- inequality stemmed from colonialism and Westernization that privileges specific groups of people over others (e.g., expats).



# Understanding Inequality: Cultural Capital



- (Pierre Bourdieu)- the material and non-material resources a person possesses or has access to that are considered useful and desirable in a particular setting.
- objectified (e.g., a house, gourmet burger)
- institutionalized (e.g., college degree)
- embodied (e.g., straight white teeth).

# Not All Burgers are Created Equal

---

- ❑ The rise of “better burgers” – focused menus, novel items, & customizable options (Caldwell 2014).
- ❑ Gourmet burgers – exemplifies **cultural omnivorosity**, a form of consumption that allows high-status groups to **show off their distinction** from other groups.
  - authenticity – simplicity, geographic region, personal & ethnic connections, history and tradition.
  - exoticism – geographically-distant, norm-breaking, unusual elements.
- ❑ **“the good taste”** – aesthetic preferences and cultural tastes were directly related to **social class**.



Brown Butter Bison Burger  
Republic Gastropub, Minneapolis

# Conclusion

---



The ranking of people into a system of social stratification influences *every* part of their lives in profound ways.



It determines **what food they eat** (the rise of the gourmet hamburger), where they shop, schools they attend, occupation, income they earn, how long they live.



It affects their quality of life and life chances.