





Housekeeping

1. **Recording** – This event is being recorded.
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3. **Q&A** – Please use the Q&A section for any questions. Chat will not be monitored for questions. We encourage participants to populate questions as the presentation advance, but all answers will be held until the Q&A. Any questions collected here but not answered during event will be reviewed and answered afterwards.
4. **Chat** – Chat will be used to share information with attendees and can be used for attendees to chat with each other. We encourage you to share comments and talk to each other in this area.



SUNY DEISJ Fellows Webinar Series 2025

Constructions of Class Identity and Power

February 14, 2025

Carla J. DuBose-Simons, Westchester Community College

Milo Obourn, SUNY Brockport



Opening/Land Acknowledgment

We acknowledge that the land on which we are experiencing this workshop is the seized and unceded territory of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, which includes the Onödawa'ga:' Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Onedia, Mohawk, and Tuscarora Nations.

<https://native-land.ca/>

<https://www.haudenosauneeconfederacy.com/>

We note at the outset that dominant Western medical models of idealized embodiment, ability and disability as well as the treatment of those socially categorized as disabled, have been formed and informed by a colonial history of violence against and erasure of native cultures and peoples. And that white Western ideals of body and mind have been used as genocidal tools against native peoples in the land currently claimed as the United States of America.

We commit to centering Indigenous peoples' movements as an integral part of questioning and challenging ableist hierarchies.



DEISJ Fellows



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DEISJ Fellows

- Support faculty in updating and developing courses that fulfill the DEISJ General Education requirement.
- Develop resources and provide targeted support for DEISJ curricular matters
- Committed to developing, sustaining, and growing a community of practice on diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice curricular issues across the SUNY system.



DEISJ Learning Outcomes

- Describe the *historical and contemporary societal factors* that shape the development of individual and group identity involving race, class, and gender;
- Analyze the role that complex networks of *social structures and systems* play in the creation and perpetuation of the *dynamics of power, privilege, oppression, and opportunity*; and
- Apply the principles of rights, access, equity, and autonomous participation to past, current, or future *social justice action*.

<https://www.suny.edu/ge>



What is “Class”?

Socioeconomic Status

Class identity

Position within capitalist system

Sets of norms and expectations

Who is represented in media and cultural products

An (often invisible) way of structuring and reinforcing racial hierarchies

A way of structuring gender norms within families and society

Experienced intersectionally in different ways

Experienced materially across many identities in similar ways



Our Students

Other than women, students with “exceptional financial need” are SUNY’s highest represented minority group.

2024: 43% of SUNY students were receiving PELL grants as compared to 30% URM ([SUNY fast facts](#)) and about 17% LGBT Students (national average)

In a general web search approximately 30% of SUNY students identify as "first generation" students.

Yet DEISJ course topics and titles tend to focus more on gender/sexuality and race/ethnicity than class identity. Why?



Why does class get overlooked and/or siloed in DEISJ work?

Bootstraps ideology and American dream erases class as a structure and identity

Many people in higher ed retain their gender or racial identity of origin but move from working class to professional class

Labor organizing is often framed through a white male lens erasing how important labor right and/or capitalist or classist critique has been to racial and gender liberation movements



Underrepresentation of Class in Higher Education

Lack of representation of poor and working-class people in media and other texts

(Public) Higher Education conceptualized as an avenue for social mobility

Many students are looking for jobs that might put them in a different class status than they grew up in

Faculty often perceived as white-collar, professional class even if they identify as and have a working-class background



Many Avenues to Teach about Class

Working class identity and culture

Labor history and social justice

Intersectional analysis with race

Intersectional analysis with gender

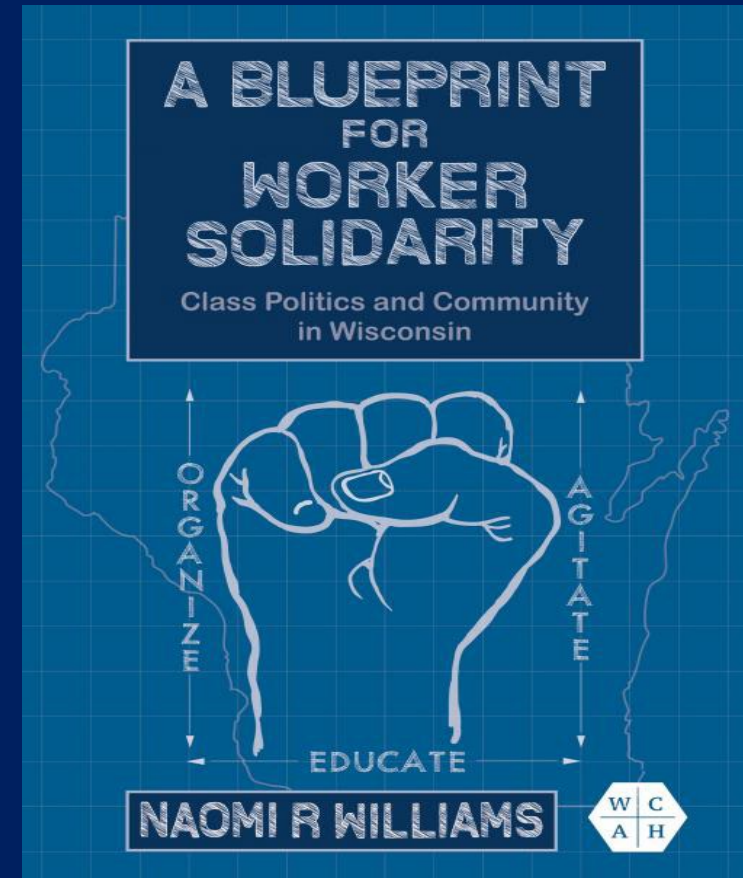
Intersectional analysis with disability

(Anti)capitalist analysis across disciplines



Teaching Labor History

- Labor organizing as social justice
 - BLM—Alicia Garza and National Domestic Workers Alliance
 - Labor organizing of sex workers and other criminalized workers in the foundation of mutual aid and other community support networks
- Intersectional history highlighting
 - Black and POC leadership in labor AFL
 - CIO Backing of Gay Marriage
 - Class politics that draw on racial analysis, incorporate equity in education and housing





Teaching Class as a Social Identity

How does one define their social class?

Income

Occupation

Education

Neighborhood / Housing

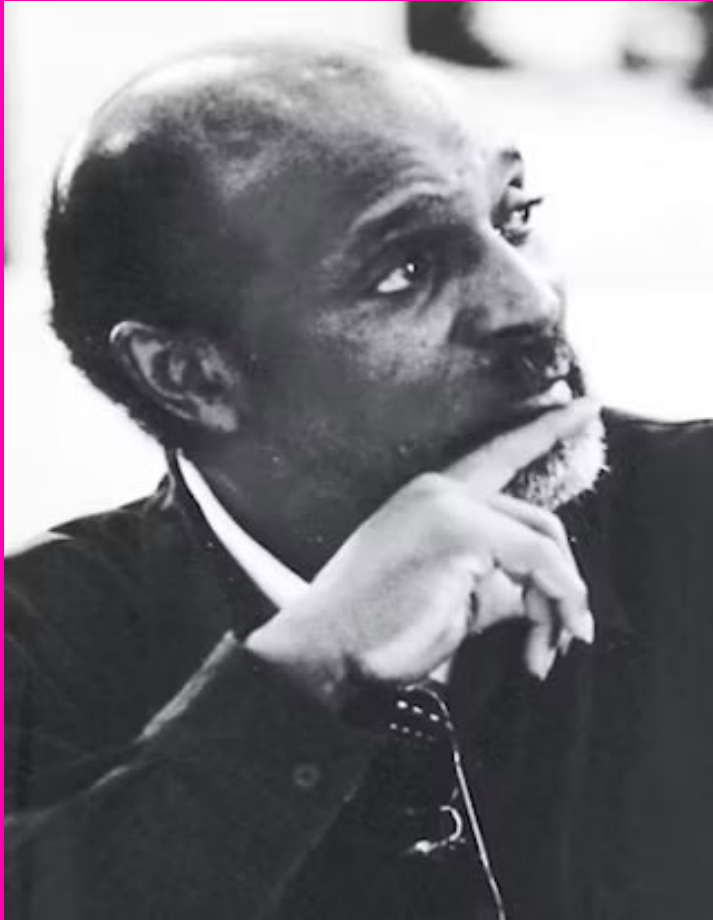
Material Culture / Possessions

Family Structure

Morals / Behavior



Racial Justice and Capitalist Critique



Black Marxism

Racial capitalism

Intersections of race and class movements

Dismantling classism within white communities that can perpetuate racism (SURJ)



Disability, Class, and Capitalism

The unemployment rate for people with a disability was 7.2 percent in 2023, about twice that of those with no disability

In 2023, people with a disability were more likely to work in service, production, transportation, moving, or sales and much less likely to work in management and professional occupations than their counterparts with no disability

Many people with disabilities need access to assistive technology and/or healthcare services which may be hard to access for lack of access to insurance or for services not covered under insurance.

Number of people with disabilities in 2023 who held a post-secondary degree in the United States was nearly half of people without disabilities.

Disabled communities have been at the forefront of organizing for mutual aid and the valuing of people and communities outside of their worth as workers in a capitalist system. (BLS)



Class-based Constructions of Gender

Traditional norms around family and gender shaped by class identity.

Family structure and roles

Public gender norms

Gendered labor norms and expectations



Reflections

Examples?

How do you incorporate class analysis
in your courses or discipline?



Citations and Additional Resources

- Bureau of Labor Statistics on Disability <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/disabl.nr0.htm>
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- Grewal, Daisy. Americans are Fast to Judge Social Class. *Scientific American*, a Division of Springer Nature America, Inc. Dec 3, 2019
- Kelley, Robin D. G. "Racial Capitalism: An Unfinished History." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 46, no. 16 (2023): 3562–68. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2023.2219301>.
- Manstead A. S. R. (2018). The psychology of social class: How socioeconomic status impacts thought, feelings, and behaviour. *The British journal of social psychology*, 57(2), 267–291.
- Mantsios, Gregory "Media Magic: Making Class Invisible," Andersen, Margaret L, and Patricia Hill Collins. *Race, Class, and Gender : An Anthology*. 3rd ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Pub. Co., 1998.
- Robinson, Cedric J. *Black Marxism : The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*. Third edition, Revised and Updated. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020.
- SUNY Fast Facts <https://www.suny.edu/about/fast-facts/>
- SUNY General Education <https://www.suny.edu/ge>
- SURJ Website on class <https://surj.org/resources/why-class-matters/>



SUNY DEISJ Fellows Webinar Series 2025

Developed by SUNY DEISJ Fellows, these webinars are aimed at supporting faculty in teaching Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice courses in the SUNY General Education Framework and beyond.

February 14 Teaching DEISJ - Constructions of Class Identity and Power

February 21 Teaching DEISJ - Critical Disability Studies and Intersectional Ableism

March 7 Teaching DEISJ - Developing DEISJ Content Across the Curriculum

March 28 Teaching DEISJ - Intersections of AI and DEISJ

For more information, visit www.suny.edu/DEISJFellows



DEISJ Curriculum Development Certificate

<https://cpd.suny.edu/deisjcert/>



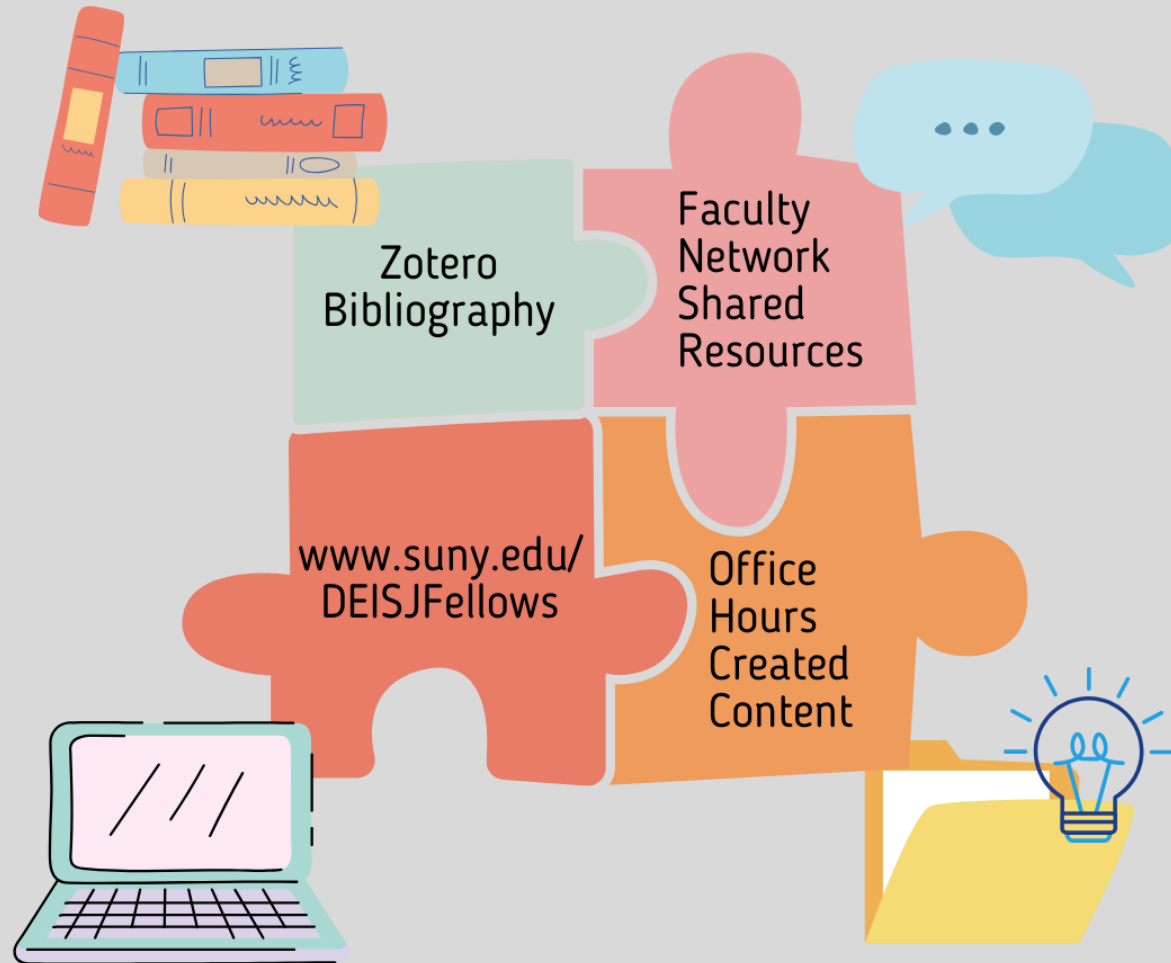
DEISJ Fellows Webpage

www.suny.edu/DEISJFellows

- Sign up for the mailing list
- Request to meet a fellow in office hours
- Join the DEISJ Faculty Network
- Check out DEISJ curricular resources
- Contact us at deisjfellows@suny.edu



SUNY DEISJ Fellows Repository





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