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Approaches to Class Analysis

Few themes have been as central to sociology as “class” and yet class remains a perpetually contested idea. Sociologists disagree not only on how best to define the concept of class but on its general role in social theory and indeed on its continued relevance to the sociological analysis of contemporary society. Some people believe that classes have largely dissolved in contemporary societies; others believe class remains one of the fundamental forms of social inequality and social power. Some see class as a narrow economic phenomenon whilst others adopt an expansive conception that includes cultural dimensions as well as economic conditions. This book explores the theoretical foundations of six major perspectives of class with each chapter written by an expert in the field. It concludes with a conceptual map of these alternative approaches by posing the question “If ‘class’ is the answer, what is the question?”

ERIK OLIN WRIGHT is Vilas Distinguished Professor at the Department of Sociology, University of Wisconsin. His recent books include *Deepening Democracy: Institutional Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance* (2003) and *Class Counts: Comparative Studies in Class Analysis* (Cambridge, 1997).

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*To the Memory of
Aage B. Sørensen
1941–2001*

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