

Cambridge University Press  
0521843049 - Approaches to Class Analysis  
Edited by Erik Olin Wright  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

## 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).

Cambridge University Press  
0521843049 - Approaches to Class Analysis  
Edited by Erik Olin Wright  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

# Approaches to Class Analysis

---

*Edited by*  
Erik Olin Wright



Cambridge University Press  
0521843049 - Approaches to Class Analysis  
Edited by Erik Olin Wright  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo  
Cambridge University Press  
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK  
[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)  
Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9780521603812](http://www.cambridge.org/9780521603812)

© Cambridge University Press 2005

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2005

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

*A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data*

Approaches to class analysis / edited by Erik Olin Wright

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-521-84304-9 – ISBN 0-521-60381-1 (pb.)

1. Social classes. 2. Sociology. I. Wright, Erik Olin.

HT 609.A65 2005

305.5–dc22

2004065036

ISBN-13 978-0-521-84304-1 hardback

ISBN-10 0-521-84304-9 hardback

ISBN-13 978-0-521-60381-2 paperback

ISBN-10 0-521-60381-1 paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this book, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press  
0521843049 - Approaches to Class Analysis  
Edited by Erik Olin Wright  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

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

## Contents

---

<i>List of figures</i>	<i>page</i> viii
<i>List of tables</i>	ix
<i>List of contributors</i>	x
Introduction	1
ERIK OLIN WRIGHT	
1 Foundations of a neo-Marxist class analysis	4
ERIK OLIN WRIGHT	
2 Foundations of a neo-Weberian class analysis	31
RICHARD BREEN	
3 Foundations of a neo-Durkheimian class analysis	51
DAVID GRUSKY IN COLLABORATION WITH GABRIELA GALESCU	
4 Foundations of Pierre Bourdieu's class analysis	82
ELLIOT B. WEININGER	
5 Foundations of a rent-based class analysis	119
AAGE B. SØRENSEN	
6 Foundations of a post-class analysis	152
JAN PAKULSKI	
Conclusion: If "class" is the answer, what is the question?	180
ERIK OLIN WRIGHT	
<i>References</i>	193
<i>Index</i>	207

## Figures

---

1.1	Three models of class analysis	<i>page 26</i>
2.1	Dimensions of work as sources of contractual hazard, forms of employment contract, and location of employee classes of the schema (from Goldthorpe 2000: 223, figure 10.2)	40
6.1	Configurations of inequality – a typology	172

## Tables

---

2.1	Possible aggregations of the Goldthorpe class schema	<i>page 41</i>
3.1	Countries classified by type and amount of class structuration	64
3.2	Models of social organization at the site of production	77
7.1	Six primary questions of class analysis	182
7.2	The life chances question in Marx, Weber, and Bourdieu	186

Cambridge University Press  
0521843049 - Approaches to Class Analysis  
Edited by Erik Olin Wright  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

## Contributors

---

RICHARD BREEN is Official Fellow in Sociology at Nuffield College, Oxford University

DAVID GRUSKY is Professor of Sociology at Stanford University

JAN PAKULSKI is Professor of Sociology and Dean of Arts at the University of Tasmania

AAGE B. SØRENSEN<sup>†</sup>, formerly Professor of Sociology at Harvard University

ELLIOT B. WEININGER is Assistant Professor of Sociology, State University of New York-Brockport

ERIK OLIN WRIGHT is Vilas Distinguished Professor, University of Wisconsin-Madison