

The Debate on Classes

Erik Olin Wright



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Erik Olin Wright's *Classes* was hailed on publication, by the *American Journal of Sociology*, as "almost certain to be the most important book on social classes" of the decade. Wright presented a bold attempt—through the subtle use of the tools of analytical Marxism—to resolve some of the long-standing problems in contemporary class theory.

The Debate on Classes brings together major critics of Wright's work to assess the adequacy of his theory. From differing perspectives, they deploy a range of empirical data—from studies undertaken in a number of countries—and they address questions as varied as the concept of "contradictory class locations," the continuing coherence of Marxist approaches to class, the relation between stratification and social development, as well as the contentious roles of gender and ethnicity in generating inequality, and the central problem of the import of "consciousness" and concrete political activity on class composition.

Also included are Wright's own spirited responses and reformulations in the light of these criticisms, thereby presenting the reader with an open, scholarly discussion in which intellectual collaboration develops an understanding of the impact of class on the wider terrain of culture and politics.

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