

AMST 355
Class and Culture
M, W, F, 1:00-1:50
GHH 208
Fall Semester, 2012
Roger Williams University

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Week of October 22

For *Monday, October 22*

Read, in *Shipler*,
10. Work Works pp. 254 - 284
11. Skill and Will pp. 285 - 300
 Epilogue pp. 301 - 309
This completes our work in *Shipler*.

Does this look familiar? It should. We were going to do this last Friday until my volcanic Nose decided otherwise.

Chapter Ten suggests some rays of light in the pretty gloomy picture we've been considering to this point. (Remember that Chapter Three was entitled *Work Doesn't Work*). Shipler suggests here a number of factors which separate work experiences which make a difference from work experiences which don't make a difference. You'll also learn about some enlightened companies making a difference through their employment policies.

Chapter 11 is the capstone to the book. (The Epilogue just reports what happened to some of the more central characters between the period of the first and second editions of the book). If you developed a fondness for some of them, you'll enjoy reading it. Shipler uses Chapter 11 to synthesize and present his best thinking on the problem of enduring poverty in the United States. The title suggests two necessary components: skill and will. Understand what he means by both, and recognize that he sees both the individual and the community need both components.

I began our study of Shipler with a quotation. I'll conclude it the same way:

Opportunity and poverty in this country cannot be explained by either the American Myth that hard work is a panacea or by the Anti-Myth that the system imprisons the poor. Relief will come, if at all, in an amalgam that recognizes both the society's obligation through government and business, and the individual's obligation through labor and family—and the commitment of both society and individual through education.

Workers at the edge of poverty are essential to American prosperity but their well-being is not treated as an integral part of this whole. Instead, the

forgotten wage a daily struggle to keep themselves from falling over the cliff.
It is time to be ashamed.

For *Wednesday, October 24*

No New Readings I very much enjoyed reading drafts which were sent to me, and I'm going to enjoy reading the final versions as well. We're going to be transitioning out of Shipler, and begin investigating *Class Matters*, in combination with other books for the course. From now on, we'll be reading *parts* of books, rather than the whole thing, and I'm going to attempt a thematic approach when doing this.

The first theme I'd like to have us explore is class mobility. In some ways, this seems a natural following our readings to date, especially the novel, *Samaritan*.

This day we're going to watch parts of another wonderful examination of issues related to class provided by PBS. The video is *People like Us: Social Class in America*. Walking the edge of the cliff, I'm going to try to have us watch this in segments. I hope my guardian angel is on duty. There is a fantastic website associated with this program. Here are the parts I hope we get to watch this first time around. I also hope you see the logic in the choices.

OPENING SEQUENCE

[Running Time: 9 minutes]

People viewing photographs and commenting on the class of the subjects
Brief introductions to people of various classes

- A. Fallen Gentry - an upper-class man who lives in his ancestral home
- B. Social Climber - a snooty woman who puts down the middle-class
- C. Working Stiff - a blue-collar business owner who criticizes salesmen in suits
- D. Social Critic - a high-school teenager who decides who's in, who's out
A montage of people defining "class"

HOW TO MARRY THE RICH (Los Angeles, CA)

[Running Time: 9 minutes, begins 24 minutes in]

Motivational speaker Ginie Sayles discloses her formula for mixing with the upper classes

[WASP LESSONS](#) (Long Island, NY)

[Running Time: 8 minutes, begins 33 minutes in]

Members of the privileged class of Americans known as "WASPs" reveal the tribal markers that help them recognize who truly "belongs."

[DON'T GET ABOVE YOUR RAISIN'](#) (Morgantown, KY)

[Running time: 12 minutes, begins 1 hour 21 minutes in]

On a trip back to her old, working-class, Kentucky home, Dana Felty, a Washington journalist, discovers how tough it is to belong to two different worlds.

The links bring you to a short synopsis of the section, and more information about those involved in the creation of it. Do look if you have the time.

For **Friday, October 27**

Read, in *Class Matters*

[A Marriage of Unequals](#) pp. 51-62

[Up from the Holler: Living in Two Worlds, At Home in Neither.](#)

Pp. 63-72

AND

Reacquaint yourself with an old friend, Richard Price. pp.237 - 240

I'm hopeful that you'll read both the material in the book and look at the material online. Make sure you notice the interactive opportunities and click away at them. What we're specifically looking at here is "class mixing" or "inter-class penetration". In the video we watched on Wednesday we saw a woman taking lessons on how to "marry up?" The story today explores some of the differences which occur when people marry across class lines.

You'll see a connection between Dana Felty's story in the video and the experiences of Della Mae Justice in the second reading today. Thomas Wolfe wrote the classic novel, [You Can't Go Home Again](#). We'll see some of the challenges here. Remember Shipler's emphasis on Kinship. Can Kinship cross class boundaries?