Glossary

Cross-references to other terms in this glossary appear in bold type.

**absolute poverty** the state in which people do not have the minimum level of income deemed necessary for living in a civilized way. Different societies will have different conceptions of this necessary minimum. Compare **relative poverty**.

**absolute social mobility** the total amount of movement of persons between classes during a specified period of time (normally within one or between two generations). Compare **relative social mobility**.

**agenda setting** the process whereby the mass media, especially television, radio and the press, determine what are important, newsworthy stories and what are not.

**assimilation** the process by which immigrant groups are absorbed into the host society.

**associations** the looser forms of social organization, such as voluntary organizations, friendship networks or religious institutions, that lie between the formal organization of employment and the immediate family.

**bimodal distribution** when the distribution of values of a variable is formed into two clusters. For example, if deaths from a disease largely affected the young or the old but not the middle-aged, those deaths would be bimodally distributed.

**blue-collar** a term referring to typical work clothing which was used to characterize manual occupations and to contrast them with non-manual (see white-collar) occupations, and which was considered a feature of the cultural differences between working and middle classes.

**bünde** social groups which have very powerful loyalties and are tightly organized but unstable. Examples are travellers and some religious cults.

**bureaucracy** a form of social organization which manifests a high degree of division of labour and specialization, formal rules, hierarchical structure of authority, and impersonal relationships between organizational members and clients.

**capitalism** a system of economic production, with distinctive institutions and social relations, which emerged in the West in the sixteenth century and which has continued to develop and extend its range since. As a system capitalism is characterized by private ownership of productive property, profit-making as a driving force, commodified transactions (see commodification), the reward of workers through wages and the use of markets as the principal mode of coordinating economic activity.

**capitalist accumulation** the process whereby the owners of the means of production use profits to build up a stock of capital which is then reinvested, with the consequence that owners increase their wealth and firms increase in size.

**civil society** that area of social relations that lies between the immediate family on the one hand and the institutions of employment and the state on the other.
class alignment used in studies of voting behaviour to describe the tendency of people belonging to the same class to vote for the same political party. See also dealignment.
class conflict the (variable) tendency for overt expression of antagonism between different social classes.
class differentials the different and unequal distribution of economic and social resources between classes.
class formation the process whereby underlying similarities in economic and social resources cause aggregates of people to see themselves as members of a class, sometimes thereafter to form the basis of collective organization and political mobilization.
class relations the abstract and concrete relationships that connect one class to another.
class solidarity a condition (variable in its degree) wherein people belonging to a particular social class perceive themselves to have similar interests and therefore feel sympathy and/or act jointly with other members of the same class.
class structure the architecture or pattern of class relations in a society, describing how classes, which may be differentiated horizontally or hierarchically, stand in relation to one another.
class struggles a term of Marxist origin which describes processes of conscious and organized antagonism between classes.
closed shop the situation where a condition of being employed in a particular job in a firm is membership of a specified trade union.
cohort study an investigation of a group of people who share a particular experience at a certain moment of time. For example, in studying the attitudes of university students, one might investigate first-year students in sociology, who form a cohort.
commodification the process by which goods and services acquire a monetary value and are capable of being bought and sold.
commodities goods and services that are produced in order to be bought and sold.
communist an individual, party, state or ideology professing the desirability of an alternative to capitalist (see capitalism) economic arrangements, emphasizing the disadvantages of private property ownership and the virtues of a more egalitarian distribution of resources.
community most usually, a collection of people within a geographical area; more loosely, a group of people who have characteristics in common.
concentration of ownership a process whereby a higher and higher proportion of sales becomes concentrated in fewer and fewer companies, and small independent firms account for a declining activity.
consumer society a kind of society in which there is an abundance of goods and services, which are increasingly used as components for lifestyles.
consumption patterns in a consumer society, the way different social groups acquire different goods and services manifesting different tastes and incomes.
corporate economy one dominated by the activities of large corporations.
counter-urbanization a process of migration away from cities towards their peripheries or to the country.
credentialism the tendency within modern societies to allocate people to occupational positions by means of the educational qualifications that they acquire.
crude death rate the number of deaths per 1,000 living members of the population per year. See mortality.
cults relatively small groups tightly bound together and organized around some kind of religious belief, though outside the main religious organizations.
cultural imperialism the imposition of its culture by one nation on others. The term is most usually used of the United States, whose mass media industries, it is claimed, are effectively forcing American values on other countries.
cultural turn a move within sociology from the 1980s onwards emphasizing the importance of cultural forms in everyday life and thereby downplaying the role of economic or political factors.
culture of dependency the way in which people who receive state benefits become dependent on them and are therefore less inclined to look for work. It is not at all clear that such a culture exists.
dealignment a term used in voting studies to describe the declining probability of members of particular groups (especially classes)
voting for a particular party. See also class alignment.

decarceration  the process of taking people out of institutions such as prisons or mental hospitals.

deindustrialization  the process identified by a decline in the proportion of workers involved in manufacturing industry (secondary sector) and an expansion of employment in service industries.

deinstitutionalization  when people spend a great deal of time in institutions such as retirement homes or prisons it is claimed that they become institutionalized – passive and dependent. Deinstitutionalization refers to attempts to reverse this process. See institutionalization.

delaying  reducing the number of levels in an organization, especially by eliminating intermediate positions in a hierarchy.

depersonalization of ownership  the tendency whereby the proportion of shares held by individuals declines and large financial institutions, like pension and insurance companies, increase their holdings.

deskilling  the reduction in the level of skill required of an individual worker, an occupation or the workforce as a whole, usually associated with changes in technology or the reorganization of working practices.

deviant behaviour  behaviour that offends against social norms or values.

direct discrimination  the open prevention of members of minority groups from gaining access to jobs, education or housing which are available to the rest of the population. Compare indirect discrimination.

discourse  an ordered and structured use of language which organizes the way in which people see their world.

discrimination  the process whereby members of social groups are disadvantaged by comparison with the rest of the population. Such discrimination can be direct and open or indirect and even unconscious.

disposable income  that income left to people to spend after income taxes and national insurance payments have been deducted. Compare gross, original and post-tax incomes.

division of labour  the way in which work, of all types, is distributed between organizations and people.

domestic labour  unpaid work performed within the household, for family or household members.

double shift  the condition of women who both engage in paid work and have principal and extensive responsibility for domestic labour within the household.

downsizing  a policy of reducing the number of workers in a given organization, especially by transferring some activities to subcontractors or other independent small organizations.

downward social mobility  movement down the class hierarchy. Compare upward social mobility.

dual labour market  a conceptualization of the labour market which identifies a sharp difference between a primary market of jobs which are comparatively well paid, secure and have career structures and a secondary market where jobs are impermanent, often part-time and lowly paid. It has the associated implication that certain categories of person, especially women and members of ethnic minority groups, tend to be concentrated in and restricted to the secondary market.

effort bargain  an agreement, often tacit, regarding the level of wages paid by an employer in exchange for an accepted intensity of effort on the part of employees.

embourgeoisement thesis  the argument prominent in the 1950s that greater affluence was leading to normative and cultural convergence between classes, with the working class adopting values and patterns of behaviour similar to those of the middle class.

entrepreneurial capitalist  a type of capitalist (see capitalism) who has direct and immediate control over all aspects of business operations. Compare executive, finance and rentier capitalists.

environmentalist  environmentalist approaches to health seek the causes of ill-health in the environment of the patient rather than in his or her biological constitution.

epidemiology  the study of the incidence of disease in the population. For example, epidemiologists might seek to discover the differing incidence of cancer between men and women.

essentialism  the view that there are invariant truths about the social world or that social phenomena are determined by an invariant core of properties. Essentialist
theories are usually counterposed to those that stress the changeable quality of social phenomena. For example, essentialist theories of identity suggest that people have an invariant core of selfhood. Non-essentialist theories argue that identity changes in a way that depends on the social context.

*ethnic groups* social groups distinguished by a common culture and a strong sense of a shared identity based on religion, language and history.

*ethnic minority* an *ethnic group* which forms a minority of a population.

*exchange-value* in Marxist social theory, the value of a *commodity* which is determined by the labour time needed to create it. The term is contrasted with *use-value*.

*executive capitalist* a type of capitalist (*see capitalism*) who is involved exclusively in the strategic management of an enterprise but who does not have a controlling block of shares in it. Compare *entrepreneurial capitalist, finance* and *rentier capitalists*.

*extended family* the wider network of relatives (e.g. grandparents, cousins, aunts) outside the immediate or *nuclear family*.

*femininity* a set of distinctive culturally specific characteristics attributed to and prescribed for women. Compare *masculinity*.

*finance capitalist* a company or individual working in the financial sector. More technically, in Marxist economic theory, finance *capitalism* is the most developed stage of capitalism, characterized by a high degree of concentration, centralization and *monopoly*.

*flexibility* a concept trying to capture recent changes in the nature of economic production – applied variably to technology, products, *labour processes* and employment contracts – and claimed to be a key feature of the emerging post-Fordist (*see post-Fordism*) economy. It implies more adaptable machines, more varied products, more versatile workers and more performance-related contracts.

*Fordism* a system of economic regulation, characterized by the production of mass manufactured foods, for mass consumption, so called because the Ford motor company furnished a prototype of the techniques of factory organization and marketing. The term is also used to describe modern industrial societies of the West in the period 1945–75.

*fractions* usually used in the sense of class fractions to mean distinctive groupings within social classes, perhaps with particular occupational characteristics or positions in the *labour market*.

*franchise* in the political context, persons enfranchised are those entitled to vote in elections, the categories of persons with such entitlement having changed over time; in the economic context, the arrangement whereby a company leases the right to sell particular branded products to other smaller, independent organizations or individual tenants.

*full employment* a goal of the *welfare state*, entailing the abolition of unemployment, such that the only persons wanting employment and without a job at any point in time would be those in the process of moving between positions, implying a level of unemployment around 2 per cent.

*gatekeepers* people or organizations that regulate access, formally or informally, to information, resources or social position. News organizations, for example, are gatekeepers in that they control what news appears in public and what does not.

*gender* the social distinction between males and females.

*gender differentials* the different and unequal distribution of economic and social resources between men and women.

*gendered subjects* individuals as produced by *discourse*.

*gender roles* socially defined attributes and expectations associated with positions or situations which are different for men and women.

*gender struggles* processes of conscious and organized conflict between men and women.

*gentrification* the process by which houses in decaying and relatively poor areas of a city are bought by *middle-class* people, thus raising property values in the area.

*glass ceiling* a barrier to prevent women rising to the highest positions in an organization as a result of informal exclusionary practices.

*globalization* the process by which the world has been increasingly transformed into an integrated global system, with greater flows of money, goods, information and
people between nation-states, which are becoming less independent of one another.

**green belt** an area of open countryside around a city in which building, except on a limited scale, is not permitted.

**gross income** the total amount of income from all sources before any deductions for income tax or national insurance. Compare *disposable*, *original* and *post-tax incomes*.

**hidden curriculum** social knowledge, behavioural traits and expectations inculcated in young people inexplicitly and indirectly by educational institutions, which serve to prepare students for their likely future roles in the *division of labour*, including their acceptance of the discipline of the workplace.

**horizontal segregation** the separation of women into different occupation groups from men. Compare *vertical segregation*.

**household** a single person, family or group in living accommodation.

**human resource management** a managerial strategy designed to obtain improved employee performance by altering employees’ attitudes to work, increasing both their commitment to carrying out tasks effectively and their identification with firm and product.

**ideal type** a simplified and abstract model or conceptualization of a social phenomenon. For example, the ideal type of *bureaucracy* is a model which shows its internal workings but which does not occur in precisely that form in any real bureaucracy.

**immiseration** the progressive lowering of the standard of living of a social group over time. Karl Marx held that, as *capitalism* developed, the *working class* would get progressively poorer.

**indirect discrimination** the prevention of members of minority groups from gaining access to jobs, education or housing by means that are not direct or open but are concealed or the accidental product of some other behaviour. Compare *direct discrimination*.

**industrial relations** all aspects of relationships between employers and workers, including negotiation over contracts and conditions of employment, worker and employer organizations, and the forms and incidence of conflict; also, the specialized field of study of these matters.

**institutionalization** institutionalized people are those who have spent a great deal of time in institutions such as prisons, mental hospitals or retirement homes and have, as a result, become passive and dependent. See *deinstitutionalization*.

**inter-generational social mobility** movement from one class to another occurring between generations, measured by comparing the class positions of children with their parents’. Compare *intra-generational social mobility*; see also *social mobility*.

**intermediate class** a concept particularly associated with a version of J. H. Goldthorpe’s model of the class structure, identifying persons who derive their livelihood from routine *white-collar* and technical occupations or from ownership of a small business. Compare *working* and *service classes*.

**internal labour market** a process occurring within some economic organizations where recruitment to more senior positions is from existing personnel at lower levels within the organization, thus offering promotion opportunities and a career structure for at least some of the labour force.

**internationalization** the way that social organizations originally confined to one country are spread to others. For example, many large media organizations are international in their ownership and operations.

**intra-generational social mobility** the movement of an individual between classes during his or her own lifetime. Compare *inter-generational social mobility*; see also *social mobility*.

**labour market** an abstract mechanism and institutional arrangement through which economic organizations requiring workers and persons seeking employment are linked together with a view to establishing mutually acceptable agreement to exchange wages for labour.

**labour process** the operational aspect of jobs, both the specific content of the work involved and the exercise of authority, which underlies relationships between employers, managers, supervisors and workers.

**life course** similar to *life-cycle* but without the connotation that its stages are fixed. Life course carries with it the implication that the stages through which a life passes are...
actually extremely varied from individual to individual.
life-cycle the passage of a person through critical life events such as birth, childhood, adolescence, mid-life, old age and death. The term does not refer to a purely biological notion of maturation but implies that the various stages are socially defined.
lifestyles patterns of social relations, the consumption of material goods, tastes and attitudes which form a whole way of life which can differentiate one social group from another.
managerial strategy a prescribed way of controlling or monitoring the performance of employees to ensure that work is completed in a sufficiently quick, reliable and effective manner to secure the economic objectives of the firm.
marital mobility the achievement of social mobility through marriage, most usually used to account for an aspect of the social mobility of women.
market a means by which buyers and sellers of goods and services are brought together so that exchanges can take place.
marketable wealth the value of the assets held by a person that can be sold. Compare non-marketable wealth.
market economy a form of economic organization in which there are well-developed means by which goods and services can be bought and sold, usually through the medium of money, and there are few, if any, controls exercised by the state on the free operation of those markets.
market relations the relationships that obtain between buyers and sellers in a market.
masculinity a set of distinctive, culturally specific characteristics attributed to and prescribed for men. Compare femininity.
means of production typically employed within Marxist social theory to mean the materials, tools and techniques employed in the production of goods.
meritocracy a society ruled by persons who merit their positions of power, usually interpreted as one where individuals with the most talent, best qualifications and greatest propensity for hard work, irrespective of family background, occupy the highest positions.
middle class a social class, whose precise composition and boundaries are disputed among sociologists, which is comprised of non-manual workers and/or whose members share some distinctive cultural and political traits. Compare upper and working classes.
monopoly the circumstance in which there is only one producer of a particular commodity, thus permitting premium pricing.
moral panic an anxious overreaction by politicians, the police, the judiciary, newspapers and television, and the general public to some perceived problem deemed to affect society as a whole. Recent examples are AIDS, BSE and the activities of travellers.
morbidity the incidence in the population of particular medical conditions.
mortality the death rate per 1,000 living members of the population. It can be expressed crudely for the population as a whole or for particular groups within the population, e.g. age or gender groups. See crude death rate.
multinational companies those which have establishments (offices, factories, branches) in more than one country.
nationalism a belief in the importance of the nation founded on the assumption that a population with common characteristics such as language, ethnicity and religion also constitutes a unified political entity.
news values the set of assumptions held by journalists about which events constitute news, and which do not, and about the manner in which those events should be treated.
non-manual occupational groups not required to undertake manual labour, including routine clerical, managerial and professional occupations.
non-marketable wealth the value of those assets held by a person that cannot be sold. The most common forms of non-marketable wealth are pension entitlements. Compare marketable wealth.
norms values or rules which act as guidelines for social action.
nuclear family the immediate family consisting of parents (or parent) and their dependent children. Compare extended family.
objective class position the location in the class structure to which an individual is allo-
cated through one of the classificatory schemes devised by social scientists or the national statistical office. Compare subjective class position.

**occupational closure** a strategic manoeuvre by practitioners of an occupation to exercise control over recruitment to that occupation with a view to restricting the supply of labour and improving their own conditions of work, used especially in relation to the professions, in which a professional association controls entry qualifications.

**occupational control** the determination of the key features of an occupation, including levels of payment, recruitment and working practices, used mostly in the exploration of the capacity of professional practitioners to regulate their own conditions of employment.

**occupational culture** distinctive norms and practices, formal and informal, associated with particular occupational groups.

**occupational group strategy** procedures espoused by practitioners of an occupation to enhance their collective conditions of work and remuneration.

**occupational structure** the total number of types of occupation available at any given time, classified systematically in the light of the similarities and differences in their attributes.

**original income** the income accruing to an individual before any deductions for income tax or national insurance. Compare disposable, gross and post-tax incomes.

**panel study** a technique of sociological investigation that involves collecting data from the same group of people over a period of time and therefore several blocks of data collection.

**partisan dealignment** the process wherein partisanship becomes weaker, which involves the preferences and support by individuals for a particular political party becoming less constant.

**partisanship** sustained preference and support for a political party.

**patriarchy** the dominance of men over women.

**petit bourgeois** the characteristic traits and attitudes of a social class (the petite bourgeoisie) who own small businesses and have no (or very few) employees.

**positional goods** those associated with a particular status position or membership of a valued social group.

**post-Fordism** a description, contested, of the contemporary phase in the organization of the formal economy characterized by flexible technologies (see flexibility) and diverse and specialized products, requiring more autonomous and versatile workers whose remuneration is geared more to individual performance. Compare Fordism.

**postmodern experience** contemporary societies are said to embody a postmodern culture. There is a great deal of disagreement about its constituents, or even whether it exists, but the following are among those features claimed for it: a collapse of large-scale systems of belief, e.g. communism; a society that lives in images rather than reality; relativism – the absence of objective standards of truth; irony and self-awareness; a disrespect for traditional artistic boundaries, e.g. between high and popular culture; and an interest in the depthless or superficial.

**post-tax income** that income left to a person after deductions for income tax and national insurance. Compare disposable, gross and original incomes.

**pressure groups** organizations designed to bring pressure to bear on government to achieve specific objectives.

**primary sector** industries, like mining, agriculture and fishing, whose products are typically raw materials directly extracted from earth or sea. Compare secondary and tertiary sectors.

**privatization** the process whereby public assets, e.g. British Gas, are sold off to private investors; also, the way in which people are turning inwards to their immediate families, or even themselves, with a corresponding reduction in contacts with extended family members, friends or the community.

**proletarian** a person whose livelihood depends on wages paid in exchange for labour and who has no control over the labour process.

**Protestant ethic** a term introduced into sociology by Max Weber, referring to a collection of beliefs that emphasize hard work, thrift and independence. In the sixteenth century such beliefs were closely associated with an emerging Protestant religion in its opposition to Catholicism.

**psephology** the study of voting behaviour.
qualitative studies those sociological investigations that do not depend on precise measurement and quantification but rely instead on achieving in-depth and detailed understanding of particular social behaviour of a relatively few subjects. Compare quantitative studies.
quango an abbreviation of quasi-autonomous non-governmental organization, meaning an organization that is generally not for profit, is in receipt of public funds, but is partly independent of government control.
quadratic studies those sociological investigations that rely on precise measurement so the findings can be expressed in a numerical form. Compare qualitative studies.

racism actions or policies that are determined by beliefs about racial characteristics.
redistributive policies policies that are designed to alter or redistribute resources, usually from rich to poor.
regionalization a process whereby resources or political power are distributed to regions of a country rather than held centrally.
relative poverty a conception of poverty which argues that people are poor when they are very much worse off than other people in their society. The consequence of such an understanding is that, as living standards rise, the level at which people are said to be in poverty will also rise. Compare absolute poverty.
relative social mobility an estimation of the chance of upward social mobility of a member of one social class compared with someone from another class. The concept was devised to control for the steady growth of jobs at the top of the occupational structure, which inevitably increases the level of absolute mobility upwards for members of all subordinate classes. However, to the extent that individuals originating in the highest classes rarely experience downward social mobility they retain a capacity to protect their privileges, a fact which would be concealed if changes in the occupational structure were not considered. Hence, sociologists calculate relative chances of mobility.
rentier capitalist one who is not active in the control of business organizations but who has stakes in the ownership of several enterprises. Compare entrepreneurial, executive and finance capitalists.
restructuring adjustment and alteration to the structure of an institution, most usually referring to economic organizations and institutions.
risk society one in which political conflicts are defined by the perception of risks of various kinds which affect everyone in a society, e.g. global warming, environmental pollution and AIDS.
ruralist ideology a set of beliefs that emphasizes the virtues of living in the country and the importance of country values.
scapes the networks that connect together organizations, places and machines. Examples are the global transport system and the cables that carry computer information.
secondary sector manufacturing industries which transform raw materials into tangible goods. Compare primary and tertiary sectors.
self-actualization the process by which people are able to be active and take the initiative rather than wait for organizations to solve their problems.
self-perpetuating oligarchies small numbers of persons currently occupying positions of power in a particular sphere of social life, who also control access to those positions, and who recruit new members from among their own families, friends or associates.
service class a section of the middle class in professional and managerial occupations whose conditions of employment are comparatively advantageous in terms of high levels of autonomy at work and high salaries. Its members share some distinctive political and cultural traits, including typically being highly educated.
sink estates housing estates, managed by local authorities, to which the poorest groups among the population are allocated and where, consequently, a disproportionate amount of socially problematic behaviour is found.
social capital that network of personal relationships, contacts and personal support that people build up outside the immediate family. Elements of social capital therefore include participation in voluntary organizations or community projects, friendship
networks, or membership of religious institutions or political parties.

**social engineering** the practice by governments or large organizations of trying to change social behaviour. For example, equal opportunities policies are sometimes described as social engineering.

**social exclusion** a term describing the way in which certain social groups are excluded from full participation in society. It has been most recently applied to the poor, who are not only materially deprived but also unable to play their part in the cultural, sporting, political and educational life of their society.

**socialization** the process whereby people learn skills, aptitudes, and conformity to the expectations, patterns of behaviour and culture of those around them.

**social mobility** the movement of persons from one class to another. *See also* inter-generational and intra-generational social mobility.

**social movements** various forms of collective action aimed at social reorganization. Social movements tend to be less tightly organized than, say, political parties.

**social relations** the patterned and structured relationships between individuals that persist over time.

**social wage** that contribution to household income which is provided by the state, whether in cash or in kind; a manifestation of policies for social welfare.

**stratification** the hierarchical ordering of individuals and groups with respect to their possession of valued resources (typically money, power or status).

**subjective class position** the location in the class structure which individuals consider, or report, themselves to occupy. *Compare* objective class position.

**suburbanization** the movement of population out of the inner city or the countryside into the suburbs.

**symmetrical family** an allegedly new family form in which partners are centred on the home, the extended family counts for less and the nuclear family for more, and there is greater sharing of domestic tasks between husband and wife.

**Taylorism** a doctrine, devised by F. W. Taylor, advocating an optimal way of organizing the labour process for maximum efficiency. It was one pillar of the Fordist (see *Fordism*) system of economic regulation.

**tertiary sector** tends to be a residual category grouping industries not clearly in either primary or secondary sectors; industries which deliver services rather than goods.

**time-space compression** in modern societies the world seems to be compressed, in that events appear to move at a greater pace while it takes ever less time to travel from one place to another. Time appears to speed up and space to shrink.

**underclass** a disputed concept implying that there is a class of the population with distinctive cultural traits who are dependent on state benefits and/or poorly paid and are therefore locked into disadvantaged circumstances.

**unemployment** the condition of lacking remunerated work, usually referring to adults of working age who would wish to be employed.

**union density** a measure of the membership of trade unions, calculated as the number currently enrolled as members as a proportion of all those employees potentially eligible to be members.

**unskilled** occupations requiring of potential employees no qualifications, training or experience.

**upper class** a superordinate social class whose power and privilege derive from ownership of property and control of key economic, social and political institutions. *Compare* middle and working classes.

**upward social mobility** movement between positions in the class structure which entails an improvement in condition. *Compare* downward social mobility.

**use-value** a term, central to Marxist economics, which designates the value of a good or service in terms of its practical usefulness, rather than by its price or exchange-value.

**vertical segregation** the concentration of men and women in different hierarchical levels within an occupation. *Compare* horizontal segregation and see glass ceiling.

**wealth** the total value of assets held by an individual.

**welfare state** a state that takes on respon-
sibility for the welfare of its citizens, including providing for their health, education and basic income. 

**white-collar** the aggregate of occupations not requiring manual labour (and its associated clothing conventions; see **blue-collar**), which, at least for most of the twentieth century, implied superior working conditions. 

**working class** a social class, whose precise composition and boundaries are disputed among sociologists, which is comprised of manual (and sometimes routine **white-collar**) employees and/or whose members share distinctive cultural and political traits.