

*Audience: Advertising Invades the Classroom*, and their 2008 release of *Consuming Kids*, that uses health care professionals, children's advocates, and industry insiders to expose the growth and malice of child marketing in the wake of deregulation.

At the end of a class like this, students understand what is meant by "ruling class," and many accept that one exists in the United States. Some want to know "how to stop these people." That could take another course or two.

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# Teaching About Class in the Library

By Emily Drabinski

Structures of social and economic class are notoriously difficult for students to see, laboring as they do under the powerful myth that America is a country of endless opportunity, where anyone can triumph over obstacles to be anything they want to be. This is the rhetoric emanating everywhere from *American Idol* to the presidency of the United States, and it is a powerful story. Library classification schemes can be a useful classroom text in this regard. Brief examination reveals them to be nearly invisible structures that determine what it is possible to know in the library. Librarian-instructors can scale this idea to help students understand that other structures are at work in our social, economic, and political lives too, even if we cannot always see them.

Library materials are arranged according to classification structures that determine where individual titles are placed on library shelves as well as their relation to other materials. Generally, public and elementary and secondary libraries are classified according to the Dewey Decimal system while college and university libraries are arranged according to Library of Congress (LC). The classification scheme functions as a kind of scaffolding, an



VIEW OF RAILROAD YARD AND CITY BUILDING  
GALLUP, NEW MEXICO

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abstract map that generates the physical layout of the library. In the case of the Library of Congress system, books about social and economic class are located in class H, the category for Social Sciences. This broad class is divided into 16 narrower classes, called subclasses. Subclass HB contains books related to Economic Theory and Demography, subclass HC contains Economic history and conditions, and so on. Books about class delineations are housed in subclass HT, Communities, Classes and Races.

Initially, these divisions appear quite objective. Books about class can certainly be subsumed under the broader category of the social sciences, and pairing class and race in the same subclass makes some sense. Still, a closer analysis reveals some problems with this arrangement, problems that are reflected in the lived reality of class as well. For example, LC places books about class in HT. The subclasses on either side of this are HS (Societies: secret, benevolent, etc.) and HV (Social pathology. Social and public welfare. Criminology). Books about class, then, are most prominently related to social pathology and secret societies rather than economic theory (HB), commerce (HF), or public finance (HJ). Used as a teaching text, LC can helpfully demonstrate the way class in the United States is often

thought as something malleably related to the individual rather than causally related to economic theory or public financing, not to mention the even further obscured relationship between class and politics (class J) and the law (class K).

Perhaps as telling as where class shows up in LC is where it does not. Its invisibility in other parts of the classification scheme parallels its invisibility in the social world, and an articulation of these silences can help students understand class as something operating even if we do not see it. Subclass HT contains books that are explicitly about class. For example, Larry Bartels' recent *Unequal Democracy* is in HT because it explicitly addresses the question of class in America. A book like the *Bell Curve*, however, is classed many shelves, even floors, away in BF, where it is shelved along with other books that address the topic of 'the intellect.' Jonathan Kozol's *Savage Inequalities* is shelved in LC, alongside books about urban education but far from works of class analysis that would contextualize his work. And literature, long the place where stories of American exceptionalism take the clearest shape, is shelved in PS, in another (library) world altogether.

In my experience teaching library skills in a variety of classes at Sarah Lawrence College and at Long Island University's Brooklyn campus, treating the LC structure as a text to be critically engaged rather than simply accepted and regurgitated is compelling to students. They can see quite clearly that structures they did not know existed have a lot of influence on what they can discover in the library. The implications are vast—these structures not only govern the library, but what and how we know, and in turn, what we can be.

## CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS “EDUCATED IN FREEDOM”

Seeking essays for an edited collection about student experiences in “free” or alternative schools. Despite many current debates about education (Charter Schools, accountability, “No Child Left Behind,” national standards, etc.), there has been little attention paid to students who have experienced education without tests, grades, assigned curriculum, or other forms of external pressure to learn. What does self-directed learning look like? What kinds of environments are created in these “free schools”? What kinds of projects/work take place in alternative schools? How do alternative schools change the experience of learning?

We are looking for well-crafted personal reflections on alternative education. We’re not looking for arguments about the pros and cons, or scholarly research on alternative education. Just tell your story. Positive and negative experiences are welcome.

- Possible topics include, but are not limited to:
- Relationships with teachers
- Descriptions of particular projects or learning experiences
- Reasons why students opted out of traditional schools
- Alternative schools as communities/within their larger communities
- The transitioning from an alternative school to a traditional school, and vice versa
- Reflections on how alternative education shaped your life after school
- For those who have become teachers themselves: how has your alternative education informed your own ways of teaching?

PHOTOS and artwork also considered.

Length: 1,500 to 4,000 words (about 5 to 20 double-spaced pages).

Format: Essays must be typed, double-spaced, and paginated. Please include your name, address, phone number, e-mail address, and a short bio.

Submitting: Send essays to [hayniea@uwgb.edu](mailto:hayniea@uwgb.edu)

Or mail to Aeron Haynie, Associate Professor of English and Humanities, TH 331, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, 2420 Nicolet Drive, Green Bay, WI 54311.