

Questions for discussion: intersections of gender and class

Part 1: Your experience

- How would you describe your own class position? Has it always been the same, and do you expect it to change in the future? How does going to university figure in your class status?
- Think of an occasion where you were made to feel particularly conscious of your class position. Was this an example of privilege or oppression? How was it inflected by your gender, your race, or other aspects of your identity?

Part 2: Overall's experience

- How is Overall's narrative inflected by her gender? Would her analysis of being a working-class academic have been different had she been a man?
- Overall claims both that her working-class background is something "to survive, overcome, and escape from," and that her "origins have conferred special strengths" [122]. Is *femininity* something to "survive, overcome, and escape from"? Does it confer special strengths?
- Overall concludes that "the university is a route to individual freedom even while it helps to preserve collective unfreedom" [125]. What does she mean? Do you agree?
- Overall analyses class relations in the context of a Canadian university. How could universities change to be more accessible to working-class students? Is this a feminist goal?

Part 3: Systems analysis

"Class appears to be a superficial characteristic, perhaps a matter of the clothes we choose to wear or the foods we happen to like, rather than what it is: a status that can be constitutive of one's sense of oneself, one's place in the world, and one's hopes and prospects" (Overall, 113). Do you agree? Does this statement commit Overall to a view of class as an "identity"—in the way that we tend to talk about gender and race, and is this compatible with a view of class as a relational location within a capitalist economy?

"The power of the class system in North America persists, in part, because of its simultaneous invisibility and apparent naturalness" (Overall, 109). What examples support this point? Would you concur with Overall's Marxian implication that ideology [a system of false beliefs that benefit the ruling class] obscures the reality of class relations?

Must a feminist also be committed to a critique of capitalism and class relations? Or could capitalism be a condition of freedom for women?