

# Reflection on economics class



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What does it mean for me to be a college student from the perspective of economic class?

### Section I: introduction

I believe that economic class has long been a central theme within higher education and that is why I am going to argue this issue in my essay. There is a big difference between social class and economic class: social classes are the hierarchical arrangements of people in society or as in the social sciences, it can be best defined 'social stratification'. On the other hand, economic class means how much money one has. In political philosophy and sociology, the most basic difference among economic classes is between the powerful and the powerless. So, I can simply conclude that the more money one has the more power that goes along (Drake 1). When I first read this, I remembered the early theory of Karl Marx who saw human beings interested more in material concerns rather than grand ideas which created a separation of effort and a division of classes depending on wealth and power (Cline 3). In turn, he defined the economic class as how one class directs the process of production while the other class is directed and provide services. However, I found a much simpler view; when a small company's owner or even a manager of a company, whatever it is, orders another employee who gets less salary than him to do a certain job, the employee is to finish the job without questioning his manager. Yet, if he was asked from a concierge, he wouldn't listen. So, I can add to my previous conclusion that the person, who has more money and power, gets more attention and obedience that leads to persuasiveness. That persuasiveness works through the ethos and the logos of money (Drake 1).

The purpose for this essay is to argue an answer to the premise question, what does it mean for me to be a college student from the perspective of economic class? Which I guess is not a simple task because this question relates to many perspectives such as academic, social, ethnic, cultural conditions and forces. Since I am talking about the higher education and how it relates to economic class, I will give a brief example on how both are related to each others. Let's take two students equal in academic abilities but not in economic classes; one has more money than the other. Both got fairly good grade in high school let's say a B and they are now thinking about what universities they have the chance to apply to. The low economic class student has limited options because he can't afford private universities fees and even if he can, he will still be thinking about how he is going to live among students from higher class, on the other hand, the high economic class student gets more options in too many different universities and can graduate as a doctor if he wants. Therefore, lots of students from the low class don't enter universities because they either feel disappointed about it or go directly to work because he thinks about earning money.

Some students may underestimate the significance of arguing an answer to such a question because they haven't heard about what Lester Faigley wrote in *Fragments of Rationality* that the modeling of subjects is not as much related to being a good writer or having good sources as from the effects of experiencing the effects of what one writes about (Faigley 23). Moreover, James Berlin argues that college rhetorical curriculum should not only guide learners through their future careers, but also help them become active members of political change and social (Mays 1). Both the ideas suggest that

we should study our culture leading us to think about our main question “ what does it mean to me to be a college student from the perspective of economic class?” Hence, I am going to argue this question via three different points of view: 1. Functional/practical section 2. Human/personal section 3. Functional and human section.

## Section II: Arguing an answer from the extreme of functional/practical

The purpose of this section is to argue a functional/practical answer to the premise question, what does it mean for me to be a college student from the perspective of economic class? The group supporting this section would think rationally about the question. It might bring into play Taha Hussein’s famous quote “ We should not expect proper, productive, efficient education from a university whose staff does not enjoy freedom and independence.” He wants to point out that many Universities in Egypt are losing their freedom at the hands of dictatorial, corrupt rulers (Hassan). One of the most efficient reasons is the very high demand on Egyptian collages every year which helps corruptors to hide their actions (Hassan). As a result, this group would say that higher education should be only for students who get high grades because these are the kind of scholars who will be able to cope with the tough system of higher education, appreciate the true meaning of being educated and do much more effort than that of others. In this way they will be decreasing the number of students leading to better education for hard workers.

The second issue that this group will address is the supply of employees in high positions (Clotfelter 2). A functional/practical student would think that

high positions such as managers or supervisors require uniquely educated people, not just any university graduate. Those people are students who graduated from universities with high GPAs by their own effort not with the help of private universities which is entered with money. This group thinks that these graduates can be the best performers in their work positions only because of their grades and that they will be the best role models for the other employees so, other employees who are working under them would simply conform to every order they ask for.

Section III: Arguing an answer from the extreme of human/personal.

The purpose for this section is to argue a human/personal answer to the question, what does it mean for me to be a college student from the perspective of economic class? As an AUC student, I have got the chance to deal with almost all economic classes. To make it easier, I can say that we have two main classes; students who pay tuition and students who come on a scholarship. Students, who pay fees, kind of disdain others who don't. They don't say the true reason behind this hatred but I guess there are two very obvious reasons: the first is some are jealous of the fact that these students are better academically. Secondly some others might think that these students' economic class doesn't allow them be a part of the AUC community. Whether they are supporters to the first or the second opinion, this group will argue an answer to the premise question from the extreme human/personal view. The American University in Cairo is the most expensive in Egypt and probably in the Middle East, so many students feel cocky about being in such a university. In other words, AUC is quite exclusive to economic position. But imagine how these elite students feel when they

become equal to others who don't have as much money. AUC has long been known for having the highest economic class in Egypt, yet this idea for many AUCians has changed after the scholarship concept was applied on a wider scale. The elite students think that AUC is not a place that can fit both economic classes because that shakes their image towards outsiders who thought that AUC had only the rich students. Although it is a non profitable organization, AUC is a very successful university because of the huge amount of money that students pay and after the tuitions were raised some students thought it was so that the university can afford paying for the scholarship students.

Everybody wants to have power, to be noticed and get the attention of the others; that's exactly what the higher economic class student in the AUC and his parents are thinking of. He already has climbed half the ladder because of his parents' wealth and position and he is going to continue after graduating by getting a high position in a company that his fathers' is a VIP costumer, paying bribe or at least inherit his father's business. Only eleven percent of the kids from poor families graduate from collages and less than nineteen percent of the eleven percent have the chance to be among the high class (Eckholm 1). So these students are considered by the higher class the directed ones; however, since work places for the people who direct are few and scholarship concept is applied in many universities, the working class is now becoming a threat because they are now part of the competition.

Section IV: A Synthesis of Oppositional Extremes

We can't think about the premise question in a complete functional/practical way because by doing so, we will have education inequality and we will be limiting education to the students with high grades only. We wouldn't be considering many other things such as a student who was sick at the day of the exam or another who is not good at a certain subject that lowered his GPA, those who don't perform well in the test environment and many other reasons. We should all be given equal chances to learn. Take Einstein for instance; although, he had speech difficulties when he was young and scored Cs when he was in elementary school, he became one of the best known physicists in the world who made new theories. Some other people when put in the real situation, they appreciate and act. This is what is called closed doors situation; some students may score low grades in elementary schools but when they see that the university is their path for their future career, they act. Regarding the second point that was argued; it has been proven that students' GPAs can't be considered the only meter when it comes to the working field (Smith 2). Many reasons were showed but the most important were the student's leadership personality and experience. These reasons might not qualify the hard working student to work in a high position despite the fact that he was one of the best learners in his school.

We can't also accept the human/personal point of view because in that way we will still be having an education inequality like in that of the Middle Ages when education was only for students from rich families. In that way we will be limiting the good education only to families who have money. So, what if there is, let's say, one student from the lower class who might be in the future Ahmed Zowail or Farouk El Baz. Why wouldn't we give him the

opportunity to enjoy a good education that will definitely help him? In turn, this student will be the best image not only to his university and colleagues but also to his country. The second point that was argued by this group was gaining or let's say inheriting power and respect by the help of their parents by entering expensive universities then owning their father's business afterwards. However, what if these students are not qualified to run such a business not because of their educational background or grades but because of what they are. It even makes a bigger problem when there is one of the working class who can fit perfectly in this business and at the same time working under a boss that is running his father's business and not that good in managing the company. How will the boss react when he finds out that there is a better guy him? How will the man from the working class react to orders that he is sure they are wrong? Will he conform to orders to save himself from getting fired or will he follow his beliefs and resist because he knows that what he is doing is the right thing? I appreciate that everyone has a dream he wants to reach and that some parents are forcing pressure on their children to make them become a doctor or an engineer without taking into consideration their abilities or what they like. However, God created us humans with different abilities and whether we like it or not, we have to accept it. Not all students can become doctors only because they earn a lot of money. We can't think like that because doctors or any other job that makes money can't replace the entire exciting jobs. Who knows maybe god blessed us with a certain gift in a specific place to change the world.

I bet that it is becoming very confusing and difficult to find a clear answer to the premise question because we can accept neither the functional/practical



nor the human/personal only. The functional/practical student is always thinking about studying hard in order to succeed and get high grades to find a good job whereby he can change his economic class to the better. On the other hand, power, money respect and attention are all what the human personal student is thinking about and he is ready to do anything in order to reach this goal whether by paying bribes or his father's help; it doesn't matter how, all it matters is to be able to reach this goal. That is why we can't accept either. However, I have found that the combination between the functional/practical extreme and the human/personal extreme is the way to find a fairly good answer to the premise question. I am not asking low and high economic class to be friend or to even pretend to be because we all know that they will never be. However, all students should be given equal opportunities to learn and enter universities but there is something that has to be changed within ourselves; how we look at professions like a plumber or a carpenter. As long as we look to these professions as a despicable job, students won't be interested in any of them leaving free spaces in these jobs. Students with super powers like the genies boy that we have here in AUC or even learners with high grades should be noticed from the elementary school then indicate their part of power then work on with them to improve it. In such world, competition is allowed but people have to understand that they aren't necessarily going to gain power in an inherited field. They should also understand that even if they gained money and power, they won't gain people's respect because they know that this authority is not self-made. Therefore, everyone should peruse the career that he loves the career that he thinks he can make a change in and be creative.

It might take longer time to prove its success but when the goal is reached, it can never be imagined.

### Section V: Significance

Now the picture is complete and I have got the true meaning behind these three topics. They are by a way or another all related to each others.

Students cheat to reach a better economic class and what motivated them to cheat is the corrupt business that was the reason for the discrimination. This and the two previous essays had a lot of significance to me because it allowed me see things although in front of my eyes, they were hidden. These major writing assignments may not change ethics about cheating, beliefs regarding gender or my vision towards people from lower class. However, discovering and analyzing many point of views made me aware of the world we are living in and the system that controls us.

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