

Semantics: Historical Evolution of Bourgeoisie

Historically, Bourgeoisie denoted an inhabitant of a walled town or a town dweller who were neither nobles or peasants and was used by the French during the Middle ages and early Renaissance (Ryan, A., 2018). From the combined words of old French “burgeis” meaning citizen of town, “borc” referring to town village and Latin “burgus” meaning fortress. It was not controversial nor important until the 18th century when people who belonged like traders and artisans accumulated wealth and moreover advocated for political rights or social reforms befitting their economic status against feudal lords or nobility. The Bourgeoisie played the role of modernizing society from traditional nobility, and with it comes the benefits of exploiting others—creating another class struggle.

With class struggle being prominent coupled with Marxist ideas in the mid-19th century, Bourgeoisie rose in usage during the industrial revolution to refer to a social order dominated by those who own the means of production or property. Sometimes called the capitalist or ruling class, they not only exploit the labor class or Proletariat but have immense influence in politics in order to maintain their power (Marx, 1867). The gap further widens as they are described as upholding status and often educated from quality schools.

By the mid-20th century to present, the word has lost its prominence. However, any political or economical conflicts nowadays cause the term to be used where people associate it commonly to the wealthy. Class consciousness, according to Marx, is a phenomenon born out of collective struggle. He articulated an idea of the working class becoming conscious of their sufferings against capitalists and therefore, forming awareness to oppose them. Further studies by Hungarian Marxist Philosopher Lukacs revealed the importance of having objective analysis and distinguishing class consciousness from the actual feeling of each individual in the collective struggle (Ryan, 2018). Subjective and improper analysis of any economical conflicts may lead to a false consciousness—permitting distortions in the perception of class identity and interest. According to Marxism, false consciousness is when the mission of destroying capitalism coupled by the working class is distorted.

Social class and consciousness frames the understanding of both the working and ruling class which may lead to a skewed understanding driven by interest. Sociologist Karl Mannheim puts forth a necessary solution of acquiring understanding through a multi-perspective objective analysis.

In the case of following what Mannheim proposes, this study aims to redefine the word as it has come to evolve from “bourgeoisie” of the French to “burgis” for the Filipinos. Inconspicuous usage of the term has deemed the original meaning invalid as it's being thrown around to describe someone who owns an object or does something that signifies wealth in a university setting, specifically in the University of the Philippines. With people having different standards of what comes off as being rich, the terms definition is unclear. This lack of clarity has caused issues towards UP students within and outside the campus. Thanks to social media, content creators have influenced the collective consciousness resulting in issues regarding economically well-off students in state universities rising in discourses. A mixture of subjective and objective takes perspectives

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