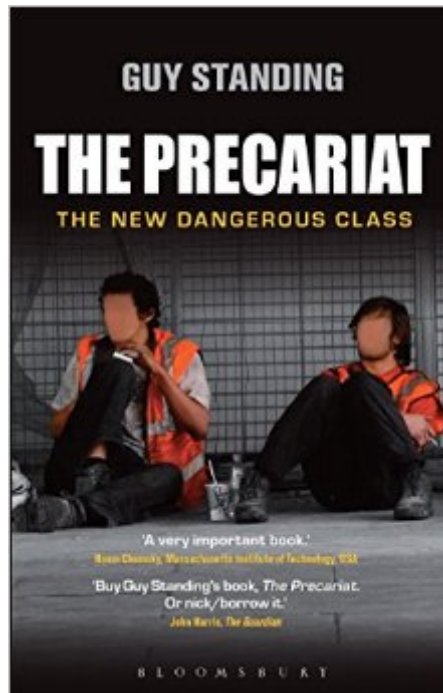


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The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class



Synopsis

Described by Noam Chomsky as 'a very important book', Guy Standing's *The Precariat* has achieved cult status as the first account of this emerging class of people, facing lives of insecurity, moving in and out of jobs that give little meaning to their lives. Guy Standing warns that the rapid growth of the precariat is producing instabilities in society. It is a dangerous class because it is internally divided, leading to the villainisation of migrants and other vulnerable groups. And, lacking agency, its members may be susceptible to the siren calls of political extremism. He argues for a new politics, in which redistribution and income security are reconfigured and in which the fears and aspirations of the precariat are made central to a progressive strategy. Since first publication of this book in 2011, the precariat has become an ever more significant global phenomenon, highly visible in the Occupy movement and in protest movements around the world. In a new preface Guy Standing discusses such developments - are they indicative of the emergence of a new collective spirit, or do they simply reveal the growing size and growing anger of this new class?

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Customer Reviews

The imposition of neoliberal economic policies and the globalisation of trade, finance and increasingly labour over the last 30 years has resulted in some pretty devastating changes. And some of the biggest changes have been in the class structures of many modern states. It is increasingly difficult to identify a 'proletariat' in the sense of a homogeneous class of people involved in factory-based mass production. Even in the burgeoning manufacturing sectors of

countries such as China, the nature of the 'traditional' classes has fundamentally changed. Guy Standing considers that we are now in a 'tertiary time', that societies have undergone a process of 'tertiarisation'. No longer is time divided between work, play and rest. And no longer is our geography divided between workplace, home and leisure. Everything, in Zygmunt Baumann's term, has become more 'liquid', less hard-defined. And in this post-modern and thoroughly commodified era, the homogeneous classes have given way to something far more fluid, heterogeneous and potentially dangerous. There are now essentially four classes. There is a numerically tiny super-rich elite whose relationship with the rest of humanity appears fleeting at best. Then there is the 'salaried', still maintaining their career privileges of pensions, holidays and other employment benefits. Alongside the salaried there are the professional technicians, or 'proficians' as Standing terms them. Often working as highly-paid consultants and contractors, they do not conform to the old 9 to 5, jobs-for-life pattern but move from job to job, company to company as desired/required.

This book is really good. It points out the gut-wrenching, society dismantling, insidious results of neo-liberal policy. As I am in the I.T. field, I am useful to the oligarchy, for now, so I have a job. But I still have no benefits to speak of, no pension, and I have to run like heck just to stay in place in this field, albeit I enjoy the constant learning. But there is little stability, as the USA government long ago outsourced I.T. to private companies, who in turn outsourced to staffing firms. So, much like I was in college, when I'd work as a temp in factories and law offices doing manual labor or clerical work, I'm still really just a temp when you think about it. When I see my friends and family who have sons and daughters coming of age, going to college, and then working at Starbucks. I have to wonder. When all my professors are Adjuncts making a pittance, while the college's administration is making more money than ever, I have to wonder. The older Americans aren't retiring, information technology is taking on more of their work resulting in less need for new labor, and so there just aren't jobs. It's hard to convince folks that the "slackard" generation of today is not the same thing as "slackards" of the 1960s or 1970s. Even though we are again making money hand-over-fist in the USA, it certainly isn't trickling down to the middle-class. Moreover, the "slackards" of today are going to college...it's just when they get out, and there are no good jobs, they opt to live in their parent's basement and play XBox instead of working.

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