

Shumway, David R., Carnegie Mellon University, United States

Class, Status, and the Culture of Economic Crisis

The Left has long taken for granted that class, an economic category, is the fundamental social division. There is strong evidence that in the U.S. in the 21st century, status has replaced class as the most important such division. Historically, status and class were hard to separate, but with the rise of PMC in the early 20th century, new registers of status were created that were not tied to wealth or to traditional positions of power. Populism has long traded on the perception of the illegitimate authority of elites, but those used to be bankers and railroad magnates. In more recent years, they have become professors or merely those who are more educated. In the current crisis, while bankers have been criticized, experts in general have been attacked. The recent film *Up in the Air*, demonstrates the new significance of status, and the new suspicion of expertise.