



# Class-Passing: Social Mobility in Film and Popular Culture

*Gwendolyn Audrey Foster*

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Oprah Winfrey, Donald Trump, Roseanne Barr, Martha Stewart, and Britney Spears typify class-passers--those who claim different socioeconomic classes as their own--asserts Gwendolyn Audrey Foster in *Class-Passing: Social Mobility in Film and Popular Culture*. According to new rules of social standing in American popular culture, class is no longer defined by wealth, birth, or education. Instead, today's notion of class reflects a socially constructed and regulated series of performed acts and gestures rooted in the cult of celebrity.

In examining the quest for class mobility, Foster deftly traces class-passing through the landscape of popular films, reality television shows, advertisements, the Internet, and video games. She deconstructs the politics of celebrity, fashion, and conspicuous consumerism and analyzes class-passing as it relates to the American Dream, gender, and marriage.

*Class-Passing* draws on dozens of examples from popular culture, from old movie classics and contemporary films to print ads and cyberspace, to illustrate how flagrant displays of wealth that were once unacceptable under the old rules of behavior are now flaunted by class-passing celebrities. From the construction worker in *Who Wants to Marry a Millionaire?* to the privileged socialites Paris Hilton and Nicole Richie of *The Simple Life*, Foster explores the fantasy of contact between the classes. She also refers to television class-passers from *The Apprentice*, *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, and *Survivor* and notable class-passing achievers Warren Buffet, Bill Gates, and P. Diddy.

*Class-Passing* is a notable examination of the historical, social, and ideological shifts in expressions of class. The first serious book of its kind, *Class-Passing* is fresh, innovative, and invaluable for students and scholars of film, television, and popular culture.

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