Class affects everyone. Regardless of your gender, your race or ethnicity, your sexual orientation, or your age, class affects you. In this country, class is a sometimes invisible, always unspoken distinction, and far too often, we’d like to keep it that way. We are reticent to speak openly about class issues. We want to keep our feelings about class secret. Even in the preparation of this book, one student, who originally agreed to be quoted about class within the Greek system, asked to withdraw her name for fear of repercussions from her sorority.

Depending on one’s perspective, class is the key or the lock to the American Dream. Art creates a unique space where it is safe to discuss issues of class and class mobility openly, and Secrets on Class at Dartmouth explores this space.

As the program culminates this spring, the Hopkins Center’s three-year Class Divide initiative has earned the distinction of being the first substantial cross-campus and community project in the country to examine issues of class through the arts. The program has featured performances and artistic residencies to raise awareness and serve as a campus catalyst for discussion about issues of social and economic class.

This book is meant to be opened and enjoyed as a report on the last three years of what has been created, but also, as a tool for what’s needed next—a jumping off point for open dialogue and creativity. Enjoy this book. Discuss this book. Become aware of how class affects your life, and do something about it.
In April, 2009, students were invited to anonymously mail in their secrets about socioeco-
nomic class, using blank 4x6 postcards as their canvases. Compiled by Spring ’09 Hopkins
Center Class Divide Student Intern Sarah Schewe ’12.

Anonymously submitted class PostSecret
‘Class Divide’... calls our attention to serious injustice that is around us every day, and forces us to recognize something we’re trained to turn a blind eye to... You can’t demonstrate equality politically, economically. But you can, culturally... We’re here as artists to prove that.

-Peter Sellars

During his residency, in addition to his public lecture, international theater and opera director Peter Sellars helped students explore the power of art to address important social issues like class inequality and its impacts. At Dartmouth, Sellars visited Theater, Music, Architecture, English and Film classes and student rehearsals.
Whenever I think about how class affects my Dartmouth Experience, I’m left with a sense of proud despair. It’s hard to look around at my peers and to know that, for a majority of them, they will never have to worry constantly about whether or not they can afford to be here. It’s like I know that I’ve earned my place here, but I have to keep re-earning it every time I clock-in at work, or have to choose books over a new pair of pants because I’ve mended my last pair too many times.

-Blythe George ‘12*

*Blythe is a first generation college student and among the 12.8% of Dartmouth students who are Pell Grant recipients. The vast majority of Pell Grant recipients (over 90% nationwide) come from families earning less than $41,000 a year. Blythe works for Dartmouth Dining Service (DDS) 12.5 hours a week during the term and 18.5 hours a week during finals period.
This jewelry is part of a body of mixed media sculpture that explores my experience of the class divide at Dartmouth. In this work I use a combination of real and faux luxury materials to represent the performative quality of wealth.
Over the past three years of Class Divide, a student intern has engaged Dartmouth students on issues of class every term. Daniella Sloane ’10, Lisel Murdock ’09, Yan Fan ’11, Roni Nitecki ’11 and Sarah Schewe ’12 have organized film screenings, student performance nights, curated exhibitions and this book.

“Through my internship, I learned that exposing yourself to the divisions around you means uncovering the assumptions and biases we’ve established”

-Roni Nitecki ’11
In fashion, the worth of something can literally be dictated by its actual assigned cost, rather than a rational mode of product cost, etc. The more a designer charges, the more elite and valued the piece is, both elitism and value playing off one another.

So, high end fashion isn’t obtainable for all, unless you can make your own clothes and avoid the cost. In my senior honors photography thesis, I made all the clothes seen on my model, therefore jumping a previous hindrance caused by a possible class divide. The photos were shot under similar modes seen in fashion photography, yet have nothing to do with selling any item.
Drawing from African tribal chant, spirituals, gospel and scat singing, Sweet Honey in the Rock performed at Dartmouth in January, 2009. Singing about issues both personal and political, the group engaged their audience’s minds and voices with their music. During their residency, Sweet Honey visited several classes. Ross Heise '09 commented on the experience, saying, “I was particularly impressed with not only the singing by the women in Sweet Honey, but also by how strong each individual of the group appeared to be. They sing about lots of social and political issues, which can be a very difficult thing. But it is their personal strength that allows them to sing about important issues and really bring them to the table.”

Here, Sweet Honey and the Dartmouth Rockapellas sing together.

“I was instantly drawn to the soulfulness and power of their music in a way I had not expected.”

-Timothy Edmonds '09
The fact that I’m embarrassed to admit that I come from a wealthy background here is, I think, telling. I actually find a sense of pride in that I clean the basement every week at my sorority because my parents won’t pay the dues - they, and I agree, don’t think it’s something they should be financing... In truth I sometimes feel a little like an imposter, playing Cinderella every week after my sorority sisters’ Wednesday night games of pong.

-Female ‘11

*This Dartmouth student (name withheld at the student’s request) pays half of the cost of her sorority’s dry dues ($70) rather than the normal $140, by doing janitorship. She earns the rest of her dues through babysitting. At Dartmouth, over 60% of eligible undergraduates (sophomore fall status and older) are members of Greek letter organizations. Full dues for Dartmouth Greek organizations range from $200 to $550 per term. Organizations have differing policies in regard to scholarships.
People assume I'm poor

And I let them.
Class and race are profoundly intertwined.

“The median income of black families in the United States is only 62 percent of the median income of white families. The typical black family holds only one tenth the wealth of the average white family. Blacks are three times as likely as whites to be poor. African Americans are twice as often out of work.”

“The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education

But that dress is on sale
I mean we’re on sale
We put the neighborhood up for sale
And they bought
They bought us a liquor store, and a Laundry mat and a
Liquor store and a
Liquor store and
Liquor store and
Uhh.. How much can I store on this new I-pod?
I mean I just want to make sure
My playlist will last as long as it takes
For people to get their FEMA checks
And last I checked
We were at war
With one, no two, possibly three
Different brown countries
But that’s easy to forget
Because for awhile there on T.V.
There were only reports on whether
Oprah was
Team Aniston or Team Jolie.
And should we feel bad?
That we are at war for democracy
At war for democracy
We are at war.
Defending our
National Hypocrisy.

Broken bottles line the street
Where little kids come to eat and
I can’t help but notice that
The gutters are overly exposed so
I’m force to cover my nose or
Just hold it real far up
Up, up, and away from it all
And away was the direction I turned
When he asked me for change.
Spare a dollar?
Spare a dollar?
And I clutched my purse as I walked away
Me in last season’s Ugg Boots
He in last weeks newspaper

And should I feel bad?
It’s not my fault
He doesn’t have a house
Because he can’t get a job
Because he doesn’t have a house
Because he can’t get a job
Because he doesn’t have a house
So he can’t get a job
And he needs an address
And he needs an address
And I need that dress
That dress over there in the window
Look past the graffiti
Don’t even worry about it
Only the kids will see it
I mean think of it as a free lesson in History
The Bloods and the Crips are just
Re-enacting Manifest Destiny
But that dress is on sale
I mean we’re on sale
We put the neighborhood up for sale
And they bought
They bought us a liquor store, and a Laundry mat and a
Liquor store and a
Liquor store and a
Liquor store and a
Liquor store and
Uhh.. How much can I store on this new I-pod?
I mean I just want to make sure
My playlist will last as long as it takes
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At war for democracy
At war for democracy
We are at war.
Defending our
National Hypocrisy.
In February 2009, the Dartmouth Theater Department staged Frank Galati’s *Grapes of Wrath*, based on Steinbeck’s 1939 Pulitzer- and Nobel Prize-winning novel. Cast member Dylan Hume ’09 said, “The Grapes of Wrath was enormously informative with regards to the class divide. It gave me a perspective on how poverty and hardship are sometimes unavoidable, but are not necessarily the end of all things. It showed me how families can stay strong throughout the bad times as well as the good. It showed me that love for our fellow man is paramount.”

“We had no idea that this work would be so relevant at the time of production... I can say that people have been watching this with a different consciousness.”

-Director Peter Hackett
I work 3 jobs (and take 4 classes) both my parents lost their jobs they don't know I have $13,000 saved in the bank and I just can't tell them... I worked too hard for it. This makes me selfish, doesn't it?
Anne Galjour, the award-winning San Francisco-based playwright, was commissioned by the Hopkins Center to create an original, one-woman play, “You Can’t Get There from Here” based on over 100 interviews with Upper Valley residents. Galjour transformed herself into multiple characters of various socioeconomic backgrounds, living on the same hillside but voicing separate fears, joys and frustrations. The play premiered at the Hop in November 2008. Said an audience member, “Anne captured some of my 35 years of Upper Valley life. People have voices within their communities...(that are) lessening as ‘newcomers’ arrive. Yet in our town, they are respected.” Another wrote, “Anne is a wonderful actress. Her sincerity made the show.”

“Galjour brought a sense of reality to the topic of Katrina, and really shed light on how much this disaster has affected people of the Gulf Coast. I believe that, especially for a class that is dealing with something that so profoundly affected people, it is important to connect with the material on a personal level.”

- William Corbett ’10
Perrier
Lilian Mehrel ’09

Do what you want to do.
One of the main difficulties I have faced as a first generation college student from a lower socio-economic class derives from my relationship with family. At home, I hear praise for my efforts, but the praise is always coupled with cautionary remarks: "Don't forget about us little people" or "Try to remember us when you're making the big bucks." At Dartmouth, I hear statistics about how Dartmouth alumni top the list when it comes to income levels. I can't help but worry that my ambitions and eventual economic success may lead my family to believe that I am a "sell out."

-Ben Campbell ‘10*

*Ben is among the 13% of Dartmouth students who are the first in their families to attend college. Of the 495 first generation students who currently attend the College, 448 receive financial aid.
The Hopkins Center’s Class Divide Initiative is a three-year, cross-campus/community project featuring a thought-provoking series of events, performances, and residencies to raise awareness and spark discussion about Class Divide, develop new audiences, and strengthen partnerships between the Hopkins Center, academic departments, and campus organizations. Class Divide is made possible by a grant from the Association of Performing Arts Presenters Creative Campus Innovations Grant Program, a component of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, and generous support from the Office of the Provost, Dartmouth College.

http://hop.dartmouth.edu/classdivide