



America's New Working Class: Race, Gender, and Ethnicity in a Biopolitical Age

Kathleen R. Arnold

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Today's political controversy over immigration highlights the plight of the working class in this country as perhaps no other issue has recently done. The political status of immigrants exposes the power dynamics of the 'new working class,' which includes the former labor aristocracy, women, and people of color. This new working class suffers exploitation in many ways in this and other advanced industrial countries as the social cost of capitalism's success in a neoliberal and globalized political economy. Paradoxically, as borders become more open, they are also increasingly fortified, subjecting many workers to the suspension of law. It is Kathleen Arnold's purpose in this book to analyze the role of the state's 'prerogative power' in creating and sustaining this condition of severe inequality for the most marginalized sectors of our population in the United States. Drawing on a wide range of theoretical literature from Locke to Marx and Agamben (whose notion of 'bare life' features prominently in her construal of this as a 'biopolitical' era), she focuses attention especially on the values of asceticism derived from the Protestant work ethic to explain how they function as ideological justification for the exercise of prerogative power by the state. As a counter to this repressive set of values, she develops the notion of 'authentic love' borrowed from Simone de Beauvoir as a possible approach for dealing with the complex issues of exploitation in liberal democracy today.

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