

Class Struggle: Prototype Rules

Draft 6

Introduction

Class struggle is a game about the economic class system in the US and the unfairness of how it works. It addresses some of the difficulties of class mobility and the fact that not all people have an equal chance within the system.

Although it is based on research and conversations with people in economically disadvantaged situations (see attached document) it has a great many limitations and is not intended to be an accurate or complete representation of any one group's experiences:

Limitations of the Author

Although I am part of a minority group, coming from a Jewish family and identifying as Jewish, it is to some degree an "invisible minority" today that does not suffer from the disadvantages more visible minorities do. This was not always the case, and may not be in the future as anti-Semitism is on the rise in the United States. But I have not personally experienced a high degree of oppression due to my religion.

My family story over-all is one of upward class mobility. However, the only things I inherited were educated parents, some good life examples, and a reasonably secure growing environment. My grandfathers were a house painter and a dock worker. My parents went to college, but were freelance authors and had to be very frugal in order to remain in the middle-class. I went to college on a pell grant and school loans, supplemented by summer income.

My personal story has been one of great motion through the economic system. At one time in my life I was unemployed with no savings and survived on a \$25 a week job and selling my blood. At another time in my life I was a CTO making \$200,000 a year. Before and after, I have been up and down the economic ladder.

As difficult and tumultuous as my economic life has been, I recognize that I have a relative position of advantage to many people. I am greatly disturbed by the socio-economic barriers that trap people in the lower-classes, and even more disturbed by the uneven ways in which they are applied. It is my hope that this game will inspire people to ask "why is it this way" and explore deeper in other media. To that end, a reader is included with this game that discusses the background research.

Limitations of the Game

The economic system and people's place within it are deliberately abstracted in this game. No specific oppressed group is represented, but rather the systems of economic oppression present in the United States today.

The game format by definition is not as detailed as a documentary or written article. In the real world, there are a great many separate but interacting socio-economic factors that impede people's rise in the economic system. The game drastically simplifies all of these down into a few abstract measures.

The goal of the game is not to teach about the mechanisms themselves, but to give the visceral experience of being caught within them.

Finally, concessions have been made to gameplay. In particular the differentials in earnings between rich and poor are compressed in order to make the game playable.

A word on dice

Class Struggle uses an eight-sided die (ap. These are available at most hobby shops. Alternately, two differently colored 6 sided die can be used to simulate an 8 sided die by reading the results through the following chart:

First Die/Second Die	1-2	3-4	5-6
1-2	1	2	3
3-4	4	5	6
5-6	7	8	(nothing, reroll)

Setup

1. Separate and shuffle the three class card stacks
2. Each player takes \$15 as starting cash
3. Each player rolls a D8 twice and writes down the results from the following charts:

Rolls	1-5	6-8
1-5	-2 Wealth rolls, -1 risk rolls	-1 wealth rolls
6-8	-1 Wealth rolls, -2 risk rolls	4. No minuses

These values are applied to all rolls during the game.

(Note: For the “social justice” variant, see Options below)

Gameplay

1. The game is played in 10 rounds. Every round a player starts by paying the upkeep cost for their class (below). If they cannot pay the upkeep, then they must immediately reduce their social capital to a level which they can pay. If they can pay for no-level then they are “homeless” and out of the game.

Class Level	Upkeep Cost
Under Class	2
Middle Class	8
Upper class	15

There are two kinds of cards. Event Cards and Opportunity cards. A player may chose not to use an Opportunity but **must** use an Event.

Each card has a Reward formula and a risk formula. These are handled slightly differently:

Reward: Roll a d8, add or subtract the +/- number and multiply by the *(or x) number. The result is added to your wealth (note that it can be negative.) When you roll your d8, subtract any wealth minus to wealth from setup from step 3 **but don't go below 0 unless the card says "negative allowed"**.

(Example cards here to illustrate the different)

Risk: Risk is rolled similarly to reward, but if you fail to roll equal to or higher then the risk number, you must roll on the legal involvement column of the class chart. Again, when you roll subtract any risk minus from step 4 to get your final number, **but in this case you can go below zero.** (This is because situations that have no risk for some people have real risks for others.)

Note that there are different results for the die roll for each class. Again, when you roll subtract any risk – from step 4 **but in this case you can always go below zero.** (This is because situations that have no risk for some people have real risks for others.)

Lost terms represent incarceration. A player must pay upkeep during lost turns (most economic responsibilities don't stop when someone is jailed) but can do nothing else during their turn.

Lost social class subtracts from the total of consecutive turns for upward mobility. If the player is not currently working on upward mobility then they drop to the next lower social class, with 2/3 of the upward mobility costs already paid.

2. **Lost Turns:** During a lost turn the player still pays their upkeep costs (many people have financial obligations that don't stop while they are incarcerated) but draw no cards.
3. **Upward Social Mobility:** A player may change their socio-economic class by paying the upkeep for a higher class for 3 rounds. They do not change class for card draws or rolls until the third round.
4. **Downward social mobility:** If, at the start of any round a player is unable to pay their upkeep costs, their status is immediately reduced to the maximum level they can pay. This remains their new socio-economic class until they can move up again as per rule 3 Above.
5. At the end of 10 rounds, whoever has the most wealth wins.

Class Chart

Class/Rule	Upkeep Cost	Legal Involvement
<i>Under Class</i>	5	Lose D8/2 turns
<i>Middle Class</i>	8	Lose 1 turn Lose 1/3 social class
<i>Upper Class</i>	15	Pay a D8*50 fine

Rules Variations

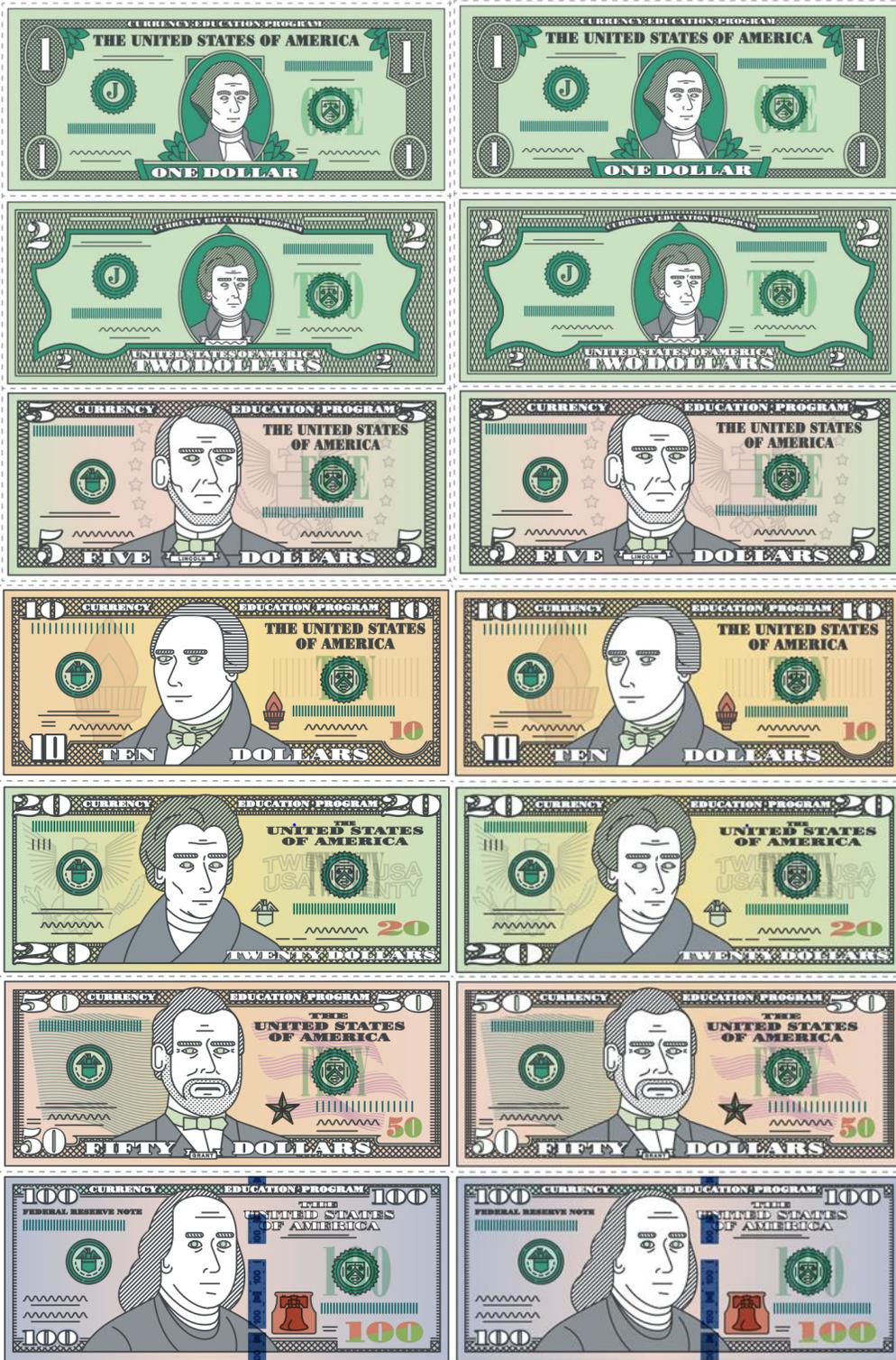
1. *The social justice variant.* This method of play is intended to deliberately place people in a privilege position opposite to what they might experience in real life based on two real-world axes, skin color and gender. Rather than rolling in Setup step 3, assign minuses according to the player's skin tone and gender as per the following chart:

Rolls	Caucasian	Other
Cis Male	-2 Wealth rolls, -1 risk rolls	-1 wealth rolls
Other	-1 Wealth rolls, -2 risk rolls	No minuses

2. *The struggling middle-class variant.* In this variant the players start in the middle class but only have \$10 to begin with. This is intended to represent the paycheck to paycheck existence of many in the middle class and illustrate the ease with which they can fall into the under-class and the difficulty they have in rising into the upper-class.

Appendix A: Paper Money

Suitable for printing, compliments of the US Treasury Dept.



Appendix B: Order of Play

This chart is provided to guide players during actual play. On your turn you do the following things:

1. Pay your class maintenance cost.
 - a. If you cannot pay your class maintenance cost, **immediately** reduce your class to a level you can pay. You will have to pay your way back up from there to get back to your previous class.
 - b. If this is your third round paying the maintenance cost of the next higher class, **immediately** raise your class to that next higher class.
2. If you are skipping your turn, end your turn now. Otherwise draw a card from the appropriate deck for your class
3. If the card is an Opportunity card, decide whether to roll or pass. If you pass, end your turn now. If the card is an Event card, continue immediately to step 4.
4. Roll one die for opportunity and one die for risk. Subject your minuses, if any, from each roll to get a roll-total. Add or subtract any minuses or pluses the card shows for that roll and then multiply that by the multiplier to get a total.

Your opportunity total is how many “dollars” you gain or lose. Your risk is compared to the risk number on the card. If your risk total is less than the card’s number you must go to the “legal involvement” rules and take the penalty it gives.

