

Cultural Capital: Problem of Literary Canon Formation



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(Prof. Shannon Wehner PhD)*

CULTURAL CAPITAL: PROBLEM OF LITERARY CANON FORMATION



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The University of Chicago Press, United States, 1995. Paperback. Book Condition: New. New edition. 214 x 149 mm. Language: English . Brand New Book. In *Cultural Capital*, John Guillory challenges the most fundamental premises of the canon debate by resituating the problem of canon formation in an entirely new theoretical framework. The result is a book that promises to recast not only the debate about the literary curriculum but also the controversy over multiculturalism and the current crisis of the humanities. Guillory argues that canon formation must be understood less as a question of representing social groups in the canon than of distributing cultural capital in the schools, which regulate access to literacy, the practices of reading and writing. He declines to reduce the history of canon formation to one of individual reputations or the ideological contents of particular works, arguing that a critique of the canon fixated on the concept of authorial identity overlooks historical transformations in the forms of cultural capital that have underwritten judgments of individual authors. The most important of these transformations is the emergence of literature in the later eighteenth century as the name of the cultural capital of the bourgeoisie. In three case studies, Guillory charts the rise and decline of the category of literature as the organizing principle of canon formation in the modern period. He considers the institutionalization of the English vernacular canon in eighteenth-century primary schools; the polemic on behalf of a New Critical modernist canon in the university; and the appearance of a canon of theory supplementing the literary curriculum in the graduate schools and marking the onset of a terminal crisis of literature as the dominant form of cultural capital in the schools. The final chapter of *Cultural Capital* examines recent theories of value judgment, which have strongly reaffirmed cultural...



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