

## Notions abordées : Espaces et échanges & Lieux et formes de pouvoir

An interview with Dr. Fiona Devine by Shelly De Vito

British Voice

# British Class System

**Shelly:** It seems that the UK is obsessed with class: can you talk to us about the traditional classes?

**Dr. Devine:** It's very much been part of the character of British society as it emerged out of being an agricultural or rural and feudal society into, of course, one of the first industrial nations, and that's where we saw the emergence of what we now refer to as our traditional British class system, which we tended to see in terms of three classes: so we had an upper class, which tended to be a bit of the remnants of an agricultural society of these aristocratic families, who own huge amounts of land. Then we had the middle class, for example, at the turn of the 20th century, was quite small, and consisted primarily of white-collar workers, high level managers, to some extent a small number of professionals. And then we talked about a working class, which was the vast majority of people say, for example, at the turn of the 20th century, who were manual workers, working in industry, particularly men working in coal mining, the steel industry, large scale factories and so on, and also a very important part of their traditional British class system, was that there was very little social mobility between the middle class and the working class, so, it was very hard to go across that manual/non-manual divide.