An outline for a workshop for students at the Athenian School (my high school! - who are mostly from places of privilege):

Exercises and questions to help wrap your mind around class issues (to be done in advisory groups):

1. List all the stereotypes - things you or you think society associate with the following terms: upper-class, middle-class, working-class, lower-class, and homeless
   1. Is there anything that goes across all groups?
   2. Were you surprised by anything that came up?
   3. Have you ever seen these stereotypes operate in the world at large? In the US? In your home country (if you’re not from the US)? In your community? At school? Among your friends?
2. What is class?
   1. Write out what you think when you hear the term “socioeconomic class” (individually)
   2. Share your thoughts and come up with collective definitions (of course there can be multiple ways to define it!)
   3. One definition that is fairly succinct: the intersections of one’s education, income, occupation, and wealth
      1. People with similar economic and social position are grouped into different “classes.” Because of these similarities, classes “may share political attitudes, lifestyles, consumption patterns, cultural interests, and opportunities to get ahead.” (from the book, Class Matters)
3. Thinking just about money now; (discuss as a group – be sure to hear everyone’s voice and perspective)
   1. Have you ever felt that someone else at Athenian had more money and was able to afford more than you?
   2. Have you ever felt guilty or ashamed or just bad about how much money you or your family have? Or have you ever felt like someone else wanted you to feel badly about it?
      1. If you have, did you ever think it was ridiculous/silly to feel bad or feel like you should feel bad about something that at this point in your life, you probably don’t have much control over? (This not only applies to your class, but also to the color of your skin, your sex, your gender, your family’s background, and your upbringing)
4. What is classism?
   1. Write out what you think it means and share with your group
   2. Possible definitions: differential treatment based on social class or perceived social class; the systematic assignment of worth based on social class; policies and practices set up to benefit people in higher classes at the expense of the people in lower classes, resulting in drastic income and wealth inequality and causing basic human needs to go unmet; the rationale and the culture which perpetuates these systems and this unequal valuing. (From: http://www.classism.org/about-class/class-definitions)
   3. Have you ever experienced classism yourself? After hearing other ideas about classism, do you think you have ever been classist? (It’s ok to say ‘yes’ to these questions! It does not mean you are a bad person – just that you live in a classist society so it’s understandable to have classist views sometimes)
   4. If you don’t think you’ve ever been classist, look back at the stereotypes you listed at the beginning and reflect on interactions you’ve had with people from different classes than yours. Have these stereotypes ever influenced your assumptions about others?
5. Now standing up and moving about the room – get into groups of 2-4 with people who you don’t necessarily know that well (this activity may make you feel uncomfortable. You don’t have to share anything you really don’t want to, but please try to push yourself outside of your comfort zone)
   1. Share one experience during your childhood that was specific to your family’s (or whoever you grew up with’s) class
   2. Share one positive effect that your class has had on your life
   3. Share one negative effect that your class has had on your life
   4. Share one positive effect that you think your class will have on you in the future
   5. Share one negative effect that you think your class will have on you in the future
   6. Share one experience at school where you felt discomfort in regards to a class issue
6. Going back to advisory groups….What is class privilege?
   1. Discuss possible definitions for this term as a group
   2. One possible definition: “Tangible or intangible unearned advantages of higher-class status, such as personal contacts with employers, good childhood health care, inherited money, speaking with the same dialect/accent as people with institutional power.” (From <http://www.classism.org/about-class/class-definitions>)
   3. Do you have class privilege? Do you know others who have class privilege? Do you think that at this point in your life, you are responsible for your (possible) class privilege? Does being at Athenian give you class privilege (or just privilege in general)?
      1. If you think you have class privilege, how do you feel about that?
      2. If you don’t think you have class privilege, how do you feel about those who do?
   4. Do those who have class privilege and those who don’t interact much at Athenian? Is there one voice/side that has a greater presence?
7. Going back to your small group
   1. Share what you think your status of class privilege is
   2. Discuss some ways that you might be able to utilize your level of class privilege moving forward when faced with issues of class, classism, and class privilege in the larger world, at Athenian, in your community, and among your friends
      1. This might include using social connections to help those who do not have as much as you, bringing your community together to face class issues head-on, or even later in life, redistributing your personal wealth.
8. Back in advisory groups.
   1. Share 2-3 things that came up that really struck you and write them all out together
   2. As a group, write out 2 things y’all feel need to be further discussed and one thing that we can do moving forward after these exercises
9. Sharing with everyone
10. Collection of written ideas from groups to be posted around campus in the following weeks