

Short Answer Question Ideas
for Class, Race, and Gender

(For use in exams, study guides, or student assignments)

Instructions: Answer each of the following questions as thoroughly as possible. Answers should be a minimum of two paragraphs, but no more than 4 paragraphs. Use at least one required course reading in each answer, unless specified otherwise.

Define ‘the American Dream’. What are the two ideological foundations that form the American Dream? Do the people Johnson interviews consistently believe in both of those equally? What is contradictory about their beliefs?

What is the meritocracy ideology? Link the meritocracy ideology back to Weber’s “The Spirit of Capitalism and the Protestant Ethic” and Marx’s “The Communist Manifesto.”

What does contemporary class inequality look like in America today? Use at least 4 course readings in your answer.

What is Bourdieu’s theory of power? In describing the three different forms of capital, also explain why the term “capital” is crucial to the theory.

Explain Lareau’s observations of the parenting styles of middle and lower class parents. What kind of cultural capital is cultivated by these styles? Are these differences in cultural capital treated equally in schools? How does each style influence the life chances of their children?

In class, we talked at length about how things are “socially constructed.” Discuss how race and gender are socially constructed as opposed to naturally/biologically “real.”

Both race and gender feel real, but ultimately depend on the creation of categories for sorting people. Using the Cornell and Hartmann reading(s), explain how racial categories are, in fact, socially constructed. Using the Kimmel reading, explain how the reliance on binary male/female categories is problematic or misleading.

Compare and contrast individual versus institutional racism. Which is more at work in upholding racial discrimination in the contemporary United States? Can we apply the same individual/institutional framework to gender discrimination?

Identify 2 specific areas of race inequality in the United States. Discuss the social and cultural structures at work in each of these areas of race inequality.

Identify 2 specific areas of gender inequality in the United States. Discuss the social and cultural structures at work in each of these areas of gender inequality.