

POSC 100 - Introduction to American Government

Paper Assignment #2

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California State University, Long Beach - Fall Semester 2020

Paper Prompt – Economic Inequality, Social Movements, and Civil Rights

The United States faces several current social and economic challenges. Today, 15% of Americans live below the federal poverty line, while the richest 1% of the population owns 40% of the nation's wealth. Additionally, large corporations and special interest groups have significant political influence. In addition to economic inequality, the United States has a long history of racism stemming from the institutions of slavery and segregation. This has led to the unequal treatment of Black Americans and other people of color by the criminal justice system. Several historical and recent social movements have struggled to attain economic and civil rights and protections from the government. Answer the following questions about economic inequality, social movements, and the struggle for civil rights in the United States:

- 1) Do economic inequality and racial injustice affect American democratic institutions? How?
- 2) Describe the economic inequality that presently exists in the United States using data. Demonstrate how levels of economic inequality have changed in recent years. Are current levels of economic inequality a problem? If so, why? If not, why not?
- 3) What are civil rights? In what ways were the civil rights of African Americans violated by the United States government and state governments after the passage of the Civil War amendments? What were some of the key accomplishments of the African American Civil Rights movement?
- 4) Although the African American Civil Rights movement achieved some important goals set out by its leaders, the United States continues to struggle with the legacies of slavery, segregation, and racism. How does race still affect many Americans today? What policies should the government pursue to try and advance the cause of civil rights in American society today?
- 5) How can the United States overcome economic and racial injustices? What specific policies should voters ask their representatives to implement? Are these policy changes realistic goals that can be achieved?

Guidelines

Sources: Use chapters 4, 7, 8, 9, and 16 in *The Struggle for Democracy*, course lectures/slides, and the films *Inequality for All* and *13th* as sources for the paper. You may also use outside sources.

Submission: A copy of the paper must be uploaded to the Dropbox on Beachboard by December 11.

Length: The total length of your paper should be 4-5 pages. Title page and bibliography do not count towards your page total.

Format: Papers must be typed and double-spaced. Use standard margins and a common 12-point font (Times New Roman, Arial, Calibri, etc.). Papers that do not use standard margins or a widely used 12-point font will be penalized.

Title Page: All papers must have a title page with the student's name and e-mail.

Citations: If you quote an author directly, you must use quotation marks around their words and footnote the quotation, including the page number. *Do not use block quotes (long quotations) in your paper.*