1. It is relatively easy to document the level of inequality in wealth or income in a given society. An equally important question for social scientists (as well as lay people) is trying to determine whether a given distribution of income or wealth is "fair" or "just". Based on your readings, how would you go about answering this question?

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Some points to consider (you need not include all of these in your answer):

a. The Marxist conception of justice and exploitation.

b. Economists' conception of "fair" wages in a market system.

c. Measures of intergenerational mobility.

d. The American ideology of a "meritocracy".

e. Evidence for and against the relative role of nature (i.e. genes) and nurture (i.e. social class, family background) on socioeconomic achievement.

2. What is distinctive about a qualitative approach to inequality? Using at least two sources, apply concepts that have been used in qualitative studies on the reproduction of inequality to two specific situations. (For example, relationships between teachers and students; internalized racism among people of color as they interact with each other. You do not have to use these two situations, they are merely examples.)

3. Since 1980, the average U.S. female-male earnings ratio has made considerable progress, going from a fairly constant 60% in the 1960s and 1970s to a high of 76.3% in 1999 for full time workers (http://www.cls.dk/workingpapers/docfiles/85.pdf). [The female-male earnings ratio was 76.3% in 2001, the same as in 1999 http://www.census.gov/hhes/income/histinc/p38.html]

Based on your readings, how do you evaluate this recent trend in gender stratification in the U.S.? Does it mean that gender stratification will gradually disappear in the U.S., or does this trend towards earnings parity mask significant barriers to socioeconomic gender equality? How does the female-male earnings ratio in the U.S. compare to that in other advanced industrial societies, and what are the implications of this comparison for understanding the U.S. trend?

4. Despite four decades of government efforts to promote racial and ethnic equality in the U.S., considerable inequalities in educational achievement, occupational achievement, and economic outcomes (including the incidence of poverty) among racial
and ethnic groups remain. Evaluate the success of the voluminous social science literature on this topic in explaining these persistent inequalities. Do this by
a. Identifying the different kinds of explanations for these persistent inequalities that have been proposed
b. Evaluating the overall empirical support for these explanations

5. One of the most comprehensive attempts to understand the nature of stratification systems over the full range of human societies is the ecological-evolutionary theory of Gerhard Lenski. Discuss the following points.
   a. What are the bases and the main categories of the typology of human societies that Lenski uses to explain the nature of stratification systems?
   b. What are the main social mechanisms that Lenski evokes to explain the nature of the stratification systems in relation to the type of society?
   c. What predictions does Lenski make regarding the evolution of social inequality in the course of socio-cultural evolution, and how successful have these predictions been?

6. The so-called “elite theorists” are sometimes treated as a footnote in the study of social stratification. This question asks you to evaluate the contributions (if any) of elite theorists to the understanding of mechanisms of social stratification. To do this, discuss the following:
   a. Who are the elite theorists?
   b. What did they say about social stratification that was distinctive compared with other approaches?
   c. In what ways (if any) did the work of elite theorists affect the current understanding of stratification mechanisms?
   d. What parts (if any) of the work of elite theorists might be worth reviving or extending to enlighten contemporary studies of social stratification? If you argue there is nothing to revive or extend, elaborate on why not.