**West Point Notes: Social Class:**

**Social Stratification:** Division of society into categories, ranks, or classes. **Social Inequality**: The unequal sharing of resources and social rewards

**2 Explanations of Stratification: Functionalists** view stratification as a necessary feature of the social structure. Funtionalists assume that certain roles in society must be performed if the system is to be maintained. People are rewarded at each level, the reward varies with the importance that society places on the job**. Conflict**: Conflict theorists see competition over scarce resources as the cause of social inequality. Based on Marx.

**Social Classes in the United States:**

1. **The Upper Class**-1% of population, comprised of “old money” and “new money”
2. **The Upper Middle Class**-14% of population, businesspeople and professionals with college and advanced degrees
3. **The Lower Middle Class**-30%, White-Collar non-manual labor jobs, nursing, owners of small businesses, can dip below the poverty level with a crisis
4. **The Working Class**-30%, manual labor, blue-collar jobs, factory work, less skilled work, service workers, often live below the poverty level
5. **The Working Poor**-22%, Lowest-paying jobs, often seasonal, or temporary,migrant farmwork, housecleaning, day labor, even though they are working they rarely make a living wage and often live below the poverty level
6. **The Underclass**-3%, families that have experienced unemployment and poverty over several generations, often require public assistance for basic survival, can be homeless, only 50% of children in this category ever make it into a higher class.

**Social Mobility:** The movement between or within social classes. **Horizontal Mobility**: Movement within a social class (Doctor moving from one hospital to another). **Vertical Mobility**: Movement between social classes, currently this trend is **downward** (causes: divorce, illness, widowhood, retirement, economic crisis, unemployment), but in periods of prosperity it can be **upward** (technological boom, high employment and good paying jobs, higher educational rates, trade). **Intergenerational Mobility**: Social class differences between generations in the same family. People think social mobility happens more often than it actually does in society. In America, social class is generally stagnant.

Poverty: Standard of living that is below the minimum level considered adequate by society. It is a relative measure. What is considered poverty in one nation might be an adequate standard of living in another. (SEE POVERTY LEVEL CHART ON PAGE 221). For a single person under 65, it is approximately $8,959 a year in income. Children represent 35% of all people who live in poverty. 57% of people living in poverty in America are women. Women also head about 50% of all poor families. African Americans and Hispanics are more likely than whites to live in poverty in the US.

Effects of Poverty: Less access to what sociologists call “life chances” like health, life expectancy, housing, food, clothing, and education. Health: Poor people are more likely to be diagnosed with heart disease, dental and eye problems, diabetes, cancer, arthritis, pneumonia, and tuberculosis due to limited access to health care, poor nutrition, health insurance, and access to preventative medication. People who live in poverty have a lower life expectancy due to disease, crime, limited health education, limited care for elderly. Poor children are 60% more likely to die in the first year of life than children not born into poverty. Children who live in low income areas that don’t generate a lot of tax revenue often attend poor performing schools in inadequate facilities with inadequate resources. Without an education, it is difficult to achieve vertical mobility in American society.

US Government Response: Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, SSI, TANF, AFDC, Food Stamps (define each term on page 227).