

The American Dream: What is it and How Can it be Achieved?

Part 1 of the class essay assignment asked you define the American Dream. Review your work on part 1 of the assignment and consider comments you received from the instructors. Revise and tighten your definition of the American Dream concept. Note the material we covered since you submitted part 1 of the essay could lead you to change your understanding of what the American Dream is, so it is possible you will revise your description of the concept substantially.

(Also, for now, remove the discussion from part 1 about whether the American Dream leads to a fulfilling, satisfying life. Save this material for possible integration into part 3 of the assignment at the end of the semester.)

The primary development of the assignment for part 2 is to explore the social processes that individuals and families use to achieve the American Dream, as you define it. The readings and the class discussions identify at least four such pathways: economic growth, quality jobs, equality of opportunity, and economic mobility. The readings, particularly Garfinkle's book and our class discussions, have identified other possible pathways (for example, economic policies, hard work, and education, among others). In your essay, discuss your views about the importance and effectiveness of the pathways that you believe are most relevant to making the American Dream a reality for U.S. families. Focus on the current situation, but feel free to describe how aspects of the pathways may have changed over time. You may find it helpful to discuss why particular pathways are *necessary*, and also to consider whether a set of pathways taken together are *sufficient* for modern Americans to achieve the American Dream.

It is sometimes helpful to explain the importance of a pathway by considering what happens when a pathway is blocked. This approach is acceptable for part 2, but we will ask you to analyze explicit barriers to the American Dream in part 3. For part 2, keep the focus of the essay on the pathways to the Dream

Your essays are due in class on **Monday, April 1**. Please turn in a hard copy. Put your name on a separate title page only, do not add your name to the essay pages. The length guideline for part 2, including your revision of material you wrote for part 1, is 10 to 12 pages.

We remind you of our general directions for writing in this course. Draw your ideas from the assigned readings and our class lectures and discussions. Recognize there are important and useful ideas in the readings that we do not have time to discuss fully in class. When grading your work, we will look specifically for effective linkages between your ideas and material from the readings. You may use outside sources if you wish, but there is no requirement to do so.