**Name: Ibrahima Bah Score: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**FALL 2023**

**BIRMINGHAM-SOUTHERN COLLEGE**

**GCS/PS 470: Senior Seminar**

***SENIOR RESEARCH CAPSTONE PROSPECTUS***

**Working, Engaging Title: *They more things change, the more they stay the same.***

**Research Question: Has the distribution of wealth, within societies, changed over time?**

**Abstract:** There is a widely accepted notion that we have made significant progress in terms of governmental organization and the development of human civilization. Not many would question the fact that our current era is far more progressive than both ancient Greek civilizations and those from the Middle Ages. However, after studying as a political science major at Birmingham Southern College, I often find myself questioning whether the world has truly changed when I learn about various current or recent events. From what I've gathered, it appears that the answer is a resounding no. The majority of countries I've come across seem to be burdened with a staggering number of individuals living in poverty or the lower class, whereas only a small few find themselves in the upper class. It seems to me that, despite the passage of time, our civilization has not made significant progress if we still have a social and economic class system that is essentially the same as those found in civilizations and communities that have existed for over a thousand years. The main goal of this research is to construct a theoretical framework, rooted in conflict theory, in order to gain an understanding of the social class structures that prevailed in the past and discern their similarities or differences compared to the contemporary era. Using data from past civilizations, I will compare it to the contemporary social classes of major countries. This analysis aims to determine whether upward economic mobility is achievable or merely an elusive dream, as difficult as a Spartan's chances of achieving success.

**Literature Review in Narrative Format (at least 10 peer-reviewed sources, including books): (Still in progress).**

**Primary and Secondary Hypotheses (dependent and independent variables):**

**Primary Hypothesis:** The distribution of wealth today resembles that of the medieval era.

DV: Wealth distribution

IV: Systems of government/socioeconomic factors

**Secondary Hypothesis:** Since World War II, the disparity in wealth has significantly increased.

DV: Wealth gap

IV: Government agenda in terms of reconstruction efforts and economic policies.

**Research Design (experimental, quantitative, qualitative, single-case, comparative, or mixed-method), including discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the methodology):** The research design will be a mixed method. I will be using quantitative and qualitative data. As well as exploratory research. The primary advantage of this method is that by utilizing data from various designs, it will yield a comprehensive answer to the research question. One limitation of mixed methods research lies in the vast amount of data that needs to be analyzed, posing a challenge in identifying the most crucial information.

**Data Sources:**

Binhammer, Katherine. *Downward Mobility: The Form of Capital and the Sentimental Novel*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020.

Chyn, Eric, et al. *The Effects of Racial Segregation on Intergenerational Mobility: Evidence from Historical Railroad Placement*. National Bureau of Economic Research, 2022.

*Economic Mobility in Europe and Central Asia: Exploring Patterns and Uncovering Puzzles*. The World Bank, 2015.

“Economic Mobility in the United States.” *The Pew Charitable Trusts*, The Pew Charitable Trusts, 23 July 2015, www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/reports/2015/07/economic-mobility-in-the-united-states.

Friedman, Murray, and Hubert H. Humphrey. *Overcoming Middle Class Rage*. Westminster Press, 1971.

Lazzarini, Isabella, and Sandro Carocci. *Social Mobility in Medieval Italy: (1100-1500)*. Viella, 2018.

Long, Jason Michael. “Labor Mobility in Victorian Britain.” *Evanston, Ill., Northwestern Univ., Diss*, WorldCat, 2002, pp. 0–140.

Ossenkop, Carolin, et al. “Ethnic diversity and social capital in Upward Mobility Systems.” *Career Development International*, vol. 20, no. 5, 2015, <https://doi.org/10.1108/cdi-12-2013-0148>.

Quirk, William J. *Abandoned: The Betrayal of the American Middle Class since World War II*. Madison Books, 1993.

Strobel, Frederick R. *Upward Dreams, Downward Mobility: The Economic Decline of the American Middle Class*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1993.

**IRB Approval Needed? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ YES** **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ No**