Information Regarding the Written Comprehensive Examination
for the Doctorate in United States History

1. All graduate students whose major field is United States History must pass the written comprehensive examination prior to taking the oral doctoral exam.

2. The written comprehensive examination will be given once a year, usually before the beginning of fall quarter.

3. The exam is designed to be written in eight hours or less. The use of notes or books is not permitted during the exam. Those taking the exam are expected to observe this restriction.

4. The examination is intended to test a comprehensive understanding of American history both before and after the independence of the United States. All facets of history (political, social, cultural, economic, diplomatic, etc.) are included. Consequently, an ability to synthesize factual information is essential.

5. Knowledge of the scholarly literature and of the principal historiographical controversies arising out of it is tested along with the examinee’s own interpretive capabilities.

6. Each answer should be written as an essay with attention to style, cogency, and coherence. Since one section of the examination will be historiographical in nature, the other two answers should reveal the candidate’s mastery of the relevant scholarship and his or her ability to synthesize factual material in response to the specific question.

7. This examination is administered by a committee of those faculty members within the U.S. Field who have taught the History 246 A/B/C series, usually during the preceding academic year. However, students preparing for it should be aware that all members of the field are invited to submit questions for possible inclusion on the examination.

8. Students’ names do not appear on their exam booklets. Each candidate will be assigned a number prior to the exam.

9. The committee will inform candidates of the results as soon as possible after the date of the examination. Committee members will be available after the quarter begins to discuss a candidate’s performance on the exam.