United States Ph.D. Written Qualifying Examination
Wednesday, September 20, 2000

You have eight hours to complete this examination. Answer one question from each section (three questions in all). You may not use any notes, books, articles, or other reference materials during the eight-hour period. Your completed exam must be returned to the history graduate office by 5:00 pm on Wednesday, September 20, 2000.

Please make sure that all pages are numbered and that your identification number (not your name) is on each page. Indicate on the face of your exam which questions you are answering.

Part 1: Select one question. Your answers should be based on historical materials and sources from the colonial/revolutionary period, the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries.

A. Early American religion pointed key groups of colonists towards the reform, regeneration and revitalization of society. Discuss how the religious visions implanted in the colonies developed into competing, national ideologies and reform programs in the course of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries.

B. One of the goals of recent work in U.S. history has been to move beyond the divide between social and political history that developed in the 1970s and 1980s. These historians have used different approaches: some have tried to bring together the social historians' concerns with agency (history from the bottom up) with political historians' concerns with power (history from the top down); some have tried to rethink power relations using various theoretical insights; and others have attempted a combination of both. Evaluate how this work has changed (or not) our understanding of the broad narrative of U.S. history.

C. Throughout U.S. history, various commentators have described the U.S. as either incredibly diverse or remarkably homogenous. The question of diversity vs. homogeneity has also driven the historical literature, from the "consensus" school through the revisionists' emphasis on political and ideological conflict to the more recent focus on various differences based on race,
class, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality, and to the concern of
some cultural historians with the homogenizing effects of
consumerism and mass culture. Develop your own argument about
the relative importance of diversity and homogeneity over the
course of U.S. history.

D. Historians and social theorists have long debated whether
economic development unfolds inexorably according to its own
laws or as the product of conscious human design. Discuss the
evolution of the United States from pre-industrial to
industrial to post-industrial society and the political and
social dimensions of economic change. To what extent has the
development of the American political economy been the product
of human agency (in various forms)? Make certain to establish
periodization, provide specific examples, and cite relevant
authors as you formulate your answer.

Part II Select one question from this section.

E. Some historians describe the Civil War as an extension of
the American Revolution—as an attempt to fulfill Revolutionary
promises and/or as the consolidation of larger social,
political, and economic transformations that began then.
Develop your own argument about whether such a connection
between the American Revolution and the Civil War is warranted.

F. Scholarly opinion is divided between the idea that
capitalism came in the first boats and that capitalism
developed in opposition to the original goals of European
settlers in the British colonies. Develop your own argument
about the origins of American capitalism.

G. Historians have long debated whether race or class was the
motivating force behind the development, maintenance, and
demise of slavery. Develop your own argument about the
relative importance of race and class in the history of slavery
and abolition.

H. Populism emerged as a political category in the late
nineteenth century in response to specific economic and
political developments. Discuss whether you think populism
should be viewed as a recurring phenomenon in American history,
traceable to the Jeffersonians and Jacksonians and woven
through the twentieth century as well, or whether it is most
usefully applied only to the end of the nineteenth century.
I. Historians have often invoked liberalism as a major theme in modern United States history. What does liberalism mean in the context of late nineteenth and twentieth century history, and how has it functioned as an intellectual and political mission since the end of the Civil War?

**Part III Select one question from this section.**

J. In 1992 Daniel Rodgers characterized “the career of Republicanism” as dysfunctional. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of republicanism in the historiography.

K. American historians have been drawn to dissenters and radicals. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of this historiographical tendency.

L. E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* has had an obvious impact on U.S. labor history. But, in less obvious ways, Thompson's work was also extremely influential in shaping all the various subfields associated with the "new" social history, particularly those that took various groups of "ordinary" people as their subjects. Evaluate the development of impact of Thompson's analytical framework on at least two of these fields, explaining both the positive and negative implications as well as the ways that work in these fields challenges some of Thompson's key assumptions.

M. In *That Noble Dream*, Peter Novick argues that by the 1980s, the American historical profession had reached a state of crisis. In the context of U.S. history, the rise of the new social history had opened up a vast array of new topics for scholarly inquiry, but it had also exacerbated a growing professional tendency toward overspecialization. What do you think of Novick's argument? Has diversity come at the expense of synthesis? Are grand narratives a necessary or desirable part of historical practice?