U.S. FIELD EXAMINATION
September 17, 2003

This eight hour exam is due back in the History Graduate Office at 5 P.M. It is a closed book exam. You may not refer to any notes or books.

Please answer one question from Part I and one from Part II. In Part I, your essay should cover the full sweep of American history, drawing more or less equally from each of the three periods in which we have divided the 246 series. Part I accounts for two-thirds of the grade for the exam (and you should allocate approximately two-thirds of your time to it). In Part II, your response can be more tightly focused, but it should not be confined within a single period (again as defined by the 246 series).

Make sure you leave some time at the end of the exam to read over your answers – and to correct errors of fact and sharpen your prose.

PART I

1. How does the theme of expansion provide a framework for understanding the broad sweep of American history?

2. Historian David Potter once called Americans a "people of plenty," describing how material abundance and a desire for accumulation marked the history of the United States. Has economic development during different periods been a source of tension over inequality, has it served to ameliorate conflict, or both?

3. Gender, which Joan Scott describes as a "useful category of historical analysis," goes beyond the history of women to examine the historical construction of and interaction between manhood and womanhood. Demonstrate the truth of Scott's claim by examining how a focus on gender alters fundamental understandings of American history. In your answer, select large-scale phenomenon in each of the three periods of American history to reexamine through the lens of gender.

PART II

1. Historian John Murrin has asserted that European immigrants to the British colonies were "the beneficiaries of catastrophe." How might this insight be applied more broadly -- across all of colonial North America and to the history of the United States in the nineteenth-century?

2. Discuss the role of race in the great periods of American reform, beginning with how race has helped to define what those periods are.

3. How has the historiographic shift form social to cultural history altered understandings of American politics?

4. Discuss the development and historical significance of that peculiarly American phenomenon, the middle class.