United States Ph.D. Written Qualifying Examination  
Fall 2007  
Wednesday, September 19, 8:00am-5:00pm

This exam is designed to take eight hours to complete. Answer one question from each section (three questions in all). The questions in Part I and Part II should each require about three hours to answer. The question in Part III, dealing with historiography, should require about two hours. You may not use any notes, books, articles or other reference materials during the eight hour period.

Remember

- Make sure that all pages are numbered and that your student identification number is on each page
- Please include a cover page that indicates which questions you are answering
- You are expected to demonstrate that you have a familiarity with a range of topics and periods. It is important that you keep this in mind as you select your questions and formulate your answers. Avoid answering questions that cover the same material.
- Your completed exam must be returned to the history graduate office by 5:00 PM on September 19

Part I: Select ONE (50 points) out of the following three questions

1. Sean Wilentz recently argued that the story of America’s political democracy must remain at the center of the national narrative. Discuss the relative strengths and weaknesses of this perspective using examples across three centuries of U.S. history.
2. One of the challenges faced by anyone teaching the American History Survey is to integrate the wealth of recent scholarship into a manageable learning experience. What themes would you use to tie together these very different levels of experience from the colonial period to the twentieth century?
3. Many define the United States as a “nation of immigrants,” suggesting a positive ideal. Yet immigration has always been a contested social process. Examine three centuries of the American past as a process of encouraging, incorporating, and/or excluding new waves of immigrants.

Part II: Select ONE (25 points) out of the following three questions

1. The English settlement of North America in the 17th and 18th centuries has often been seen as the outcome of an encounter between Old World values and the transforming effect of New World conditions. Choose one colony or region and evaluate the relative weight of these two factors from its founding to the era of the American Revolution.
2. The 19th century saw a transition from an agrarian and Atlantic centered republic to the emergence of a major industrial power by 1900. Select at least two areas (urbanism, politics and government, intellectual/social reform, labor, race, gender, the West) and discuss the impact of the market economy and the rise of industrialism on American society.

3. Many argue that the suburb is quintessentially American. Examine the strengths and weaknesses of using suburban history as a lens for understanding twentieth-century American life.

**Part III: Historiography. Select ONE (25 points) question out of the following four questions**

1. Biography is embraced by the masses, yet often dismissed by academic scholars as simplistic. Discuss the relative strengths and weaknesses of this methodology, using at least four biographies to make your points.

2. Identify one historian whose work you think has been particularly influential and discuss how her or his work has transformed historical scholarship.

3. In recent years, U.S. historians have increasingly adopted a transnational perspective on American history. Evaluate the utility of this historiographical development by examining at least three important books which have attempted to understand American history in contexts broader than the nation state.

4. Cultural history has emerged as a force in recent decades. Discuss its impact – positive and negative-- on two of the following areas: environmental, race and ethnicity, gender, consumerism, slavery.