United States Ph.D. Written Qualifying Examination
Fall 2009
Friday, September 18, 8:00am-5:00pm

This exam is designed to take eight hours to complete. 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.

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 18.

Part I: Three Centuries. Broad interpretive synthesis. Select ONE out of the following three questions. Time: approx. four hours. Worth: 50%

1. Two big themes in U.S. history have been the pursuit of freedom and the pursuit of empire. Are these tendencies best characterized as contradictory or as symbiotic? Write a focused narrative of American history addressing this question.

2. Ralph Waldo Emerson declared that “America is the country of the Future. It is a country of beginnings, of projects, of vast designs and expectations.” It has also been a country wrenched by momentous events. Select four transforming events from three different centuries that you believe shaped American society. Discuss their causes and consequences, linking them across space and time.

3. Globalizing American history is now a popular subfield with a growing number of practitioners. Write a global history of the United States between the colonial era and the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. Be sure to select, identify and discuss the trans-national dimension of key domestic events.

Part II: Topics. Select ONE out of the following four questions. Time: approx. two hours. Worth: 25%

1. The American Revolution has been described both as radical and conservative. Take a position on this controversy by writing an essay comparing at least three elements of pre- and post-revolutionary society and/or government.
2. Sean Wilentz argues that the rise of political democracy defines and delineates America’s nineteenth century while Daniel W. Howe stresses the enormous economic and cultural impact of the communication and transportation revolutions. Advance your own narrative on this critical century describing and discussing the importance of reform, religion, and political movements, 1800-1900.

3. Citizenship is a formal political category. Discuss how citizenship (in both its formal and informal limits) shaped the story of inequity in the United States from the early republic to the 1960s.

4. Compose a narrative of women’s history that examines decisive shifts in the balance between family and work. Your essay must cover at least one century and at least two races (or ethnicities) or classes.

**Part III: Historiography. Select ONE question out of the following four questions.**

**Time: approx. two hours. Worth 25%.**

1. Discussing the work of at least three or four historians, describe changes in the historiography of any one of these topics over the course of the twentieth century:
   - Native Americans;
   - Puritanism;
   - the causes of the American Revolution;
   - slavery;
   - the causes of the Civil War;
   - Industrialism;
   - Labor;
   - Progressivism;
   - Women’s status;
   - Immigration;
   - the environment.

2. Intersectionality is the theory that socially and culturally constructed inequalities interact with one another and that scholars therefore need to avoid employing categories like race, class, gender, and sexuality in isolation from one another. Assess the strengths and/or weaknesses of this approach by examining how at least three or four historians have significantly changed the historiography by applying the concept of intersectionality.

3. Herbert Bolton pioneered the concept of “borderlands” in 1921; in recent decades it has gained much currency in the field of western history. To what extent has this concept influenced and changed our understanding of U.S. western settlement and development? In your essay, select three historians working in different time periods to illustrate your argument.

4. Choose one historian that you believe has made a significant impact on the field of U.S. history in the twentieth century, discussing and analyzing her/his scholarly work, reputation, and legacy.