African American

Please answer the early American question in SECTION A and two of the questions in SECTION B in essays bringing historical and historiographical knowledge to bear on the issues raised. Please choose at least one question from among the last three.

SECTION A

1. Two bodies of literature have influentially addressed the rise of mass racial slavery and of white supremacy in British North America. One (expressed differently in the works of Lerone Bennett, Ted Allen, Robin Blackburn, Mary and Oscar Handlin, and Edmund Morgan, for example) emphasizes class and labor markets as determinative factors. The other, typified for example by the writings of Kathleen Brown and Jennifer Morgan, stresses relationships among gender, race, and power. What is the distinctive contribution of each approach? How might they be brought together? What writings best put matters in a transnational context?

SECTION B

1. Numerous scholars have argued that gender is uniquely tied to the experiences of African Americans in the United States across time. Discuss the ways African American women have been central to discourse about race, labor and gender regionally and hemispherically. Be attentive to the ways in which racial formation and class and issues of respectability figure into the defeats and triumphs of black women in relations with each other, with black men and with groups outside the black community. Which myths about their character and disposition reappear across time, and how have such myths been challenged by black women and their allies? Engage key arguments in classic as well as controversial works pertinent to the colonial, antebellum, Reconstruction, and post-Reconstruction periods through 1900. Draw on literature that emphasizes black women’s ties to their own communities as well as society at large in socioeconomic and cultural ways (i.e. explain how they have been situated as laborers, commodities, race women, etc).

2. The history of slavery was, until the 1960s, written with the master (and to some extent mistress)/slave relationship at its center. Since the 1960s, it has often been written with
slave/slave relations and community building among slaves as its foci. Citing key works, assess the strengths and weaknesses of each approach. What studies especially effectively incorporate both slave-to-slave relationships and the relations of slaves to the power of masters and/or mistresses in the same work?

3. Historians of late have begun reconceptualizing the “Civil Rights” and “Black Power” movements. Critically assess recent trends (e.g., locality, women and gender, black class relations, the focus on northern struggles, etc.) in the scholarship of post-World War II black social movements. In your response, discuss how using the term “Black Freedom Movement,” and referring to the existence of a “long” movement, affect scholars’ understanding of the scope of black social insurgency in the 20th Century. Be specific in your references to key texts and authors, drawing from both seminal and recent works.

4. Divide the African American experience into historical periods and discuss the evolution of African American people from the 17th Century to the beginning of the post-World War II era. Your discussion should highlight major themes such as black agency, women and gender, and the building of black community and civil society. In your response, be sure to identify and explore major watershed events and turning points (e.g., the First World War and the Great Migration) around which African American history has transitioned and/or transformed from one moment or period to another.

5. Black urban history is perhaps the single largest subfield in the historical literature on the African American experience. Identify and trace the development of the main conceptual paradigms and historiographic trends (e.g., Ghetto Synthesis, Proletarianization, agency and community building) in the evolution of African American urban history from the publication of W.E.B. DuBois’s *The Philadelphia Negro* to the contemporary moment. In your response, critically discuss the dialogue among the different schools of thought that have influenced the development of the field, as well as those that may be considered as falling on the margins or outside the field’s main conceptual paradigms. How does your own developing work on the themes of black migration, community building, and the meanings of region, space and place in Southeast Missouri potentially contribute to and/or complicate the extant scholarship on African American urban history? Be specific in your references to key texts and authors.