Borders and Borderlands Examination

Answer three of the following four questions.

1. On the surface, the porous, demilitarized border separating the United States from the largely English-speaking people of Canada bears little resemblance to the contentious border separating the U.S. and Mexico. Nevertheless, the two borders have had a common impact on formation of national, cultural and ethnic identity among the citizens of the American nation state. Assess the accuracy—and the limits of this statement.

2. Borders are generally conceived as political or cultural markers, places where “big” ideas about public life collide. But borders are also places where ideas about gender and private life interact and change. How have scholars who use gender as their principal lens of social analysis viewed U.S. borders and borderlands? What forces have affected gender historians’ views of the border? What opportunities are there for students of gender to work on border issues in the future?

3. Scholars focusing on the U.S./Mexico border have analyzed the border as a site of violence, hybridity, and resistance. Identify and analyze key works that illustrate these conceptualizations. How do these shifts resonate with or challenge Herbert Bolton’s “Borderlands” and Frederick Jackson Turners’ “Frontier Thesis”?

4. How has scholarship on indigenous peoples challenged traditional borderlands narratives of nation-state formation and empire? Similarly, how has the scholarship on Mexican-Americans (or Chican@s) similarly challenged traditional borderland scholarship? How do these competing traditions of the borderlands historiography resonate? What are their points of tension? When warranted be sure to address competing approaches to race, class, gender, and sexuality between and within each body of scholarship.

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