Britain, Empire and Commonwealth from 1688  
Preliminary Examination  
Fall 2010

Answer one question in each section. You must do a total of three (3) questions. 
Be sure each essay has a clear line of argument, addresses as many dimensions of 
the question as possible, and offers relevant, persuasive evidence from specific 
secondary sources wherever appropriate. Good luck!

Section I: CHOOSE ONE

According to Robinson and Gallagher in their 1953 "Imperialism and Free Trade" essay, 
every imperial historian "is at the mercy of his [sic] own particular concept of empire; his 
final interpretation rests upon the scope of his original hypothesis." Choose three such 
concepts of empire (residing in one historian's work or a group of several), identify the 
arguments that undergird each, and evaluate the cogency of each. Which is the most 
usuable, persuasive, historically accurate? For whom, and why? The question presumes the 
centrality of body, race, gender, and labor to the viability of any conceptual framework.

What difference does it make to the new imperial history when it is written from the 
perspective of African studies? Be sure to define your terms, engage both historical 
problems and historiographical issues, and compare the view from Africa with one other 
colonial location (India, British Columbia, etc). Where possible, rely on a dynamic 
historical account of both fields as you develop your integrated and/or reconstituted 
model of empire history.

Section II: CHOOSE ONE

How do we understand and interpret imperial attempts to map, order, and organize spaces 
as well as the people that inhabited them? How have 'ordering' and 'nature' worked in 
tandem in British history to further the political and social work of colonialism? What 
forms has resistance taken? How does the use of space as a category of analysis work to 
challenge changing imperial logics of the 18th through the 20th centuries?

Discussions of globalization often include mention of the rapidity of change and 
incessant motion. However, these references often obscure the relationship between 
mobility, coercion, and violence. What are the larger issues at stake in discussing 
 mobility within British history? How does the category of mobility widen our scope and 
what does it obscure? Discuss the issues of surrounding mobility as a category of analysis 
in at least three contexts between the seventeenth and the twentieth centuries.

Section III: CHOOSE ONE. N.B.: you can extend your chronologies backwards or 
forward as long as you justify the dates. 

Salman Rushdie is famous for his observation that most of English history happened 
overseas so the English don't know what it means. Yet William Gladstone also remarked
that "the sentiment of empire is innate in every Briton." How would you construct an undergraduate syllabus on Victorian Britain that operates from these premises, captures the "chaotic pluralism" of empire and remaps the fact of global empire(s) onto the "domestic" narrative without re-inscribing 1) the kind of English exceptionalism or 2) the Indo-centricity on view in both Victorian and postcolonial readings of imperial culture?

Imperialism is arguably a synonym for multiple, often simultaneous, forms of violence - extractive, epistemic, bodily, psychological, structural, redistributive, political, technological, panoptical, military, global, inter-imperial, intra-colonial - across time and space. Construct a 300 level syllabus that stages this argument for the period 1750-1950 and that enables students to appreciate the history of these categorical imperatives for the British case. Be sure to address the work of imperialism "at home" as well as in colonies/possessions/territories.