Colonial/Post-Colonial Prelim

Answer three questions total, at least one from Group A and one from Group B. You should pick questions that will enable you to discuss a wide selection of texts from your bibliography.

Group A:

1) Some theorists say that post-colonial studies began with the publication of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* and his inauguration of the study of “colonial discourse.” Briefly explain how Said utilized this new methodology, the subjects he addressed, and the limitations of his work. Then discuss what post-colonial theorists and scholars have done to expand upon this critical insight. Finally, reflect upon whether colonial discourse has reached its limits as a critical methodology in post-colonial studies and where perhaps post-colonial studies might be headed.

2) Stuart Hall writes that there were powerful overlapping discourses that helped to construct the idea of “Europe,” especially as a bastion of Christian faith against Islam, while Dipesh Chakrabarty and Partha Chatterjee criticize mostly Western scholars for a developmentalist narrative that privileges the expansion of Western ideals and institutions – either as “free market democracy”, mode of production, or the nation-state – and appropriates even the views of the colonized into Western discourses. Explore how this Eurocentrism has affected the writing of history and how post-colonial critics have sought to either question, overturn, or go beyond linear narratives. Finally assess the overall strengths and weaknesses of their argument and argue whether the field as a whole has overcome or failed to overcome this dilemma.

3) Because of the global condemnation of colonialism expressed in nationalist movements, but perhaps even more so, the disappointing post-colonial record of anti-colonial nationalism, the question of resistance has been a consistent preoccupation of post-colonial research. How has this problematic been articulated in the writings of prominent theorists like the Subaltern Studies scholars, Gayatri Spivak, Benedict Anderson, Homi Bhabha, Edward Said, Benita Parry, and other contemporary scholars? Thinking about Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, does nationalist resistance have any salience today? Has it been overwhelmed by hegemonic “Empire,” or, from another angle, by anti-imperial, swarming “multitudes”?

Group B:

1) How has scholarship on gender, affect, and sexuality affected our understandings of colonialism? In answering this question, you should comment specifically on the ways it has (and has not) focused attention on women and how it has (or has not) altered understandings of power.
2) There is a long tradition of approaching colonial history through the archives of particular empires (Spanish, British, Japanese, U.S., etc.) What are the benefits and costs of such approaches and to what extent have native/subaltern, transnational, inter-imperial, and global history affected the ways that empire has been mapped?

3) Ann Stoler has argued that the debris created and left behind by imperialism and colonialism cannot just be understood as a colonial legacy, because the debris continues to shape the lives of formerly colonized peoples. Evaluate this argument as it applies to militarization, environmental degradation, and political mobilizations.