Spring 2012
Comparative Empires Preliminary Examination

This examination has one required essay. You must also choose 2 others, as directed below. Be sure to make a clear argument, support it with evidence and address the full scope of each question. Good luck!

Part A. Required Essay

To what extent is core-periphery still a viable model for thinking about imperial history? What models threaten to displace it, how do they address space and power, and what new questions do they raise about historical method and interdisciplinary practice? Consider to issues of mobility, networks, imperial power, connectivity, and counter-flows. Assess the lessons learned and pitfalls of core-periphery interpretation by examining specific monographs and journal articles.

Part B. Theory and History of Empires (choose one)

1) Postcolonial theory has been driven by presumptions about empire that come largely from modern imperial histories. Yet historians working from the medieval period through the 18th century have been among the most energetic in turning up new paradigms for pre-modern empires. Assess this contradiction, map the debates and stake your own claim about the role of archives in the making of theories of empire.

2) Citing specific scholars, explain what historians of colonial societies have learned from sociological, literary, anthropological, and subaltern methods and theories. What do historians still need to learn from non-historians to deepen our knowledge of the colonial and non-western pasts? In your assessment, what is the ideal relationship between theory and historical research? Where do (or where should) historical methodologies intersect with the methodologies of other fields? Where do (or where should) they depart from other disciplines? Using several well-selected historical monographs, illustrate your answers to the above questions-and evaluate why you would or would not use these theories as models for your own work.
Part C. Indigenous History (choose one)

1) Assess the reach of early modern and modern empires on native societies. Where do histories of empire leave off and those of indigenous peoples begin? How does one do imperial history without reproducing colonial forms of knowledge? To what extent are conquest, occupation, colonial "reform" and its cultural practices the result of colonizers' work and resistance or conformity by "natives"? Can we appreciate empire or native pasts without historicizing those relationships jointly, in tandem, as entangled histories?

2) Imperial histories of the last two decades have presumed the power, even the hegemony, of empire, whereas indigenous histories have argued for resistance and/or autonomy for “native” communities. Sketch this debate as it has unfold in the British and Spanish imperial historiographies and assess the state of the field. Are these two groups speaking past one another or is there common ground?