Comparative Empires Exam

Spring 2013

Choose at least one question from each section below and answer three questions in all producing responses supporting a clear analysis with well-chosen and numerous examples.

SECTION ONE

1. To what extent has the core-periphery model of nation and empire/home-and-away been supplemented, even superseded, by transnational, intra-colonial and global alternatives? Is the story of the Island Race primarily a metropole-colony one or an assemblage? If the former, how does one plot the state and its agents? If the latter, what is the right and proper role of migration, mobility, commodity and labor flows in shaping its parameters? (Why) have these questions been asked mainly outside Britain proper, by ex-colonial peoples? What is, in short, a postcolonial history of empire-Britain?

2. Has Indocentricity characterized the study of empire in the process making, as some have contended, the exception the rule? How have the writings of subaltern studies scholars transformed imperial history and what might some of the limits to the extrapolation of such insights to scholarship on empires elsewhere be? In answering this question also provide an overview of the study of British colonialism in South Asia and address how the locations and archives of empire render this study differently?

3. (Why) is the body an important archive for historians of gender and colonialism? What do analyses of power, violence and governmentality (arguably 3 highly gendered technologies of imperialism) gain from attention to embodiment and corporality? What differences does a history of the body under colonial regimes make to the study of women, gender and colonialism more generally?

SECTION TWO

1. The study and critique of empire has often been directed toward a revolutionary horizon. From Lenin’s imperialism, to Rosa Luxemburg, to the writings of Walter Rodney and of Frantz Fanon, and to the contemporary works of Hardt and Negri and of Tiqqun, analysts have variously cast empire and colonialism as structures within which a series of axes of domination are articulated. But, in the radical critique of empire is there anything been made opaque? Does empire, as some have suggested, enable a critique of
domination that apprehends the obtuseness that has consistently privileged class relations in the process? In this literature, are the terms “empire” and “imperialism” interchangeable?

2. To what extent, and with what results, has the study of slavery and abolitionism been removed from the study of empire? How does your own scholarship in these areas add to or challenge the comparative study of imperialism? Are there models on which you can draw?

3. In their recent *The Making of Global Capitalism: The Political Economy of American Empire*, Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin have argued that the American state acts as an empire as an overseer of the global capitalist economy. Assess the validity of this argument. Put their book into engagement with other literatures of imperialism and suggest how drawing upon that broader work could transform, strengthen, modify, or upend their interpretation?