Comparative Race Prelim

Fall 2015

Choose three questions from the six below -- answer 3 questions in all. Your responses should be supported by a clear argument, a persuasive analysis and well-chosen examples. Good luck!

1. To what extent are the insights and methods from the history of race in the US portable to Latin American contexts? (how) have historians grappled with these questions? what would cross-fertilization in the other direction (Latin American paradigms applied to US histories) look like?

2. How does David Theo Goldberg’s formulation of a “racial state” provide a useful structure within which to view the similarities and differences in the histories of racial hierarchies in the Americas? Does this formulation account for the revision of those hierarchies as well as their creation? Explain.

3. Why is an intersectional approach to comparative race studies – i.e. one that is shaped by the assumption that, as Paul Gilroy has posited, gender is the modality in which race is lived – advantageous? What is gained by a method that presumes an entanglement of systems of race, class, gender and sexuality?

4. How has the emerging concept of indigeneity challenged earlier understandings of race relations and racial politics in settler societies?

5. Stuart Hall calls race a “floating signifier.” To what extent does his analysis obscure or enable materialist readings of the histories of racialized communities? What are the possibilities and limits of a history of slavery that investigates both identity- and interest-based formations and phenomena? What are the stakes of such a method at this juncture in the field of comparative race history?

6. “Race” has been studied in a variety of contexts—migration, slavery and labor, popular culture, gender, and indigenous history. Each area of focus has generated a rich and provocative literature about the nature of racial thinking and the consequences of racial ideology. Where have these separate literatures overlapped most productively? Using three examples, explain how the different literatures of comparative racial history have intersected in a way that deepens our understanding of race and history in the Americas.