Answer one question from each of the following pairs:

I.

a. Beginning in the 1970s, historians of colonial America shifted their attention from cultural and political history to narratives that focused on social life and directed attention away from European elites (mostly male) to groups previously considered marginal: women, children, slaves, Native Americans and indentured workers. In recent years, however, historians have developed approaches that attempt to reconstitute cultural and political histories that draw together stories of elites and the marginal; both rulers and the ruled. Is this broad chronological description accurate? What is the potential of this new synthetic work? What are its pitfalls?

b. As a field, environmental history, has played a marginal role in the historical study of Early America. Aside from a few notable monographs, the field has had little impact on the scholarly understanding of settlement, colonial expansion, local politics or American state formation. Is this true? Explain.

II.

a. Recently historians have turned to violence as an organizing theme in Early American history. Most prominent in this regard is Ned Blackhawk’s VIOLENCE OVER THE LAND, a study of conquest and settlement in the Rocky Mountain region. Violence, however, was exercised over people as well as land and territory. How might violence be used as an organizing theme in the history of North America prior to 1783? What would be the major elements of that history? What scholarly works would be your guide in establishing such an overview? Where would there be significant “gaps” in the literature?

b. Over the course of the past generation, historians have shifted their interest from the history of women to the history of gender relations and gender categories. How has this shift altered our understanding of the history of slavery, of Native Americans, of political participation and of the family in Early America?

III.

a. The expansion of white American settlement into the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys in the two decades following the Treaty of Greenville defines one of the most dramatic moments in U.S. history. Within a few decades ten new states entered the Union, transforming not only American political culture, but the nation’s social and cultural landscape. The northern portion of that story—the “settlement” of the modern Midwest—was traditionally encapsulated into a narrative of democracy and upward mobility. But that narrative is not only problematic on its face, but it tends to emphasize the difference between Midwestern history and the history of the South, a region dominated by slavery. If you were to organize a seminar on “The Midwest and the Nation, 1776-1830,” how would you introduce students to both this distinctive regional history and its ties to larger themes and processes in North America?

b. As the historical literature on slavery and race in the Americas has proliferated, scholars have increasingly argued that, instead of representing a “peculiar” institution or theme in U.S. history, the development and imposition of racial hierarchies was rooted in ideas and relations encompassing the Old and New Worlds and has been a fundamental organizing principle in the social, political and economic cultures of American life. Nowhere was race irrelevant and nowhere were racial categories immaterial. This impassioned arguments sounds overstated to many students and scholars. Is it? Explain.