Frontiers/ Frontier Theory
Constructed Field/ Preliminary Examination

Fall 2009

Answer three question from the selection of six below. You must do a total of three (3) questions. Be sure each essay has a clear line of argument, addresses as many dimensions of the question as possible, and offers relevant, persuasive evidence from specific secondary sources wherever appropriate. Good luck!

1. How portable is the Turner thesis beyond the geography of the 19th and 20th century United States? Discuss Turner's main premises and the limits and possibilities of their application to 3 different time/spaces.

2. "Frontier" is often understood as a spatial category. In what other ways can we think of "frontier" outside geographical space? Discuss at least two other possibilities.

3. If we are to assess the viability of frontier as a usable method, we have to range it against other methodological possibilities. Why not contact zone, borderland, hinterland? Discuss the interpretive possibilities of frontier versus contact zone and one other spatial category of your choosing and offer the pros and cons of each in discrete historical circumstances.

4. One of the main premises of "frontier theory" is the way frontiers condition and inform "national character" and identity. Discuss the "modernity" of this assumption and at least two possible problems applying this assumption to ancient history.

5. Are the possibilities of "frontier" as an analytical category dependent on imperial circumstances? Justify the term by using cases from both empires and cross-cultural/cross-topographical histories.

6. One can reasonably argue that "frontier theory" offers an explanatory frame both in the formation of state (national or empire) as well as movements of the subaltern. Discuss this applicability with at least two references in each category.