Gender and Empire Prelim  
Sept. 2011

Instructions: Answer one question from each section for a total of three essays. In each one, be sure to advance a clear argument and to discuss specific scholars and a wide range of the relevant historiography.

Section 1

Almost 25 years have passed the publication of Chandra Talpade Mohanty’s article “Under Western Eyes.” How has the scholarship on the exclusion of Third World women from epistemological paradigms developed since then? Have these critiques resonated with and been accommodated within the study of gender and empire, and if so, how?

The assumption of the ubiquity of heterosexuality in imperial relations was widespread in the scholarship on empire until, roughly, the mid-1990s. Which have you found to be the most useful texts that have challenged this assumption, and why?

Section 2

Both historians of empire and foreign relations historians have (to varying degrees) adopted gender as an analytical tool in recent years. What do you think that scholars identified with each of these fields might learn from each others’ considerations of gender? And how have analyses centering gender, race, and/or class affected the boundaries between foreign relations history and the history of empire, if at all?

Assess how the use of gender as an analytical tool has affected understandings of mobility in imperial contexts. You should be sure to consider how well gendered approaches to both mobility and immobility have (or have not) illuminated power relations.

Section 3

How would you design an undergraduate survey class on gender and empire? In answering this question, you should do the following: 1) explain (in terms intelligible to a general education board) why the course merits approval, 2) briefly outline key course topics, readings, and assignments, 3) explain the rationale for these topics, readings, and assignments, 4) discuss what you see as the central pedagogical challenges in designing a course on this topic; and 5) comment on whether the host department – an area studies unit, Women’s and Gender Studies, Global Studies, or History -- would affect the nature and content of the course, and if so, how.

The study of gender and empire must be interdisciplinary. Where do the most significant tensions lie between historical methodology (as you define it) and gender studies in the study of empire? How have diverse authors such as Sara Ahmed, Philippa Levine and Anne McClintock tried to resolve these tensions in their work? To what extent have their efforts have been successful?