Gender, Power, and Transnationalism
Fall Semester 2011

Directions: There are three categories of questions below. Select ONE question from each of the categories and respond with an essay that provides a clear, concise argument and that makes liberal use of the texts, sources, from your prelim lists. At the end, you should submit three essays. Make sure to leave enough time to check your responses.

PART A Transnationalism
1. What does a transnational approach to the history of gender in the Caribbean offer that a nation-based approach does not? And, as a corollary, what do nation-based approaches offer to the history of gender in the Caribbean that transnational approaches do not? Please provide specific examples of scholarship to support your discussion.

2. Transnationalism and nationalism are two constructs that have often been pitted against each other in the writing of Caribbean history; national histories, or histories conceived within national boundaries, continue to be seen as the predominant paradigm of writing the histories of this particular region. How has the perspective brought forth by transnational studies transformed the writing of Caribbean history? How has it challenged the division between the internal and the external in nation-based histories? And how has transnationalism informed the making of the nation, and vice versa, how has the making of the nation-state led to transnational processes?

PART B Social Processes
1. Various forms of bonded labor, including indentured servitude, slavery, colonial military service, coerced sexual labor, and temporary coerced labor, had existed in the Caribbean region for several hundred years. How did these systems of labor help to construct patterns of social relations in the region (migration, work, leisure, class, gender, or race relations)? What difference has the emancipation, or the generalized termination of such forms of bondedness or indebtedness, made in affecting the sociopolitical relations of race, gender, sexuality, or nationality?

2. Reviewing the scholarship on migration (whether forced or voluntary) in the Caribbean, to what extent has gender been understood as a central category of analysis? In what ways has gender shaped histories of migration in the Caribbean? And in what ways has migration shaped histories of gender in the Caribbean?

PART C Race, Empire, and Geography
1. Within the field of queer studies, a growing body of scholarship has interrogated the ways in which sexuality cannot be understood without attending to the histories of race in specific national and transnational contexts. To what extent are “intersectional” approaches or the insights of “queer of color critique” relevant for
the historical and theoretical study of sexuality in Caribbean contexts? To what extent are these approaches visible or absent in existing scholarship?

2. Empire, or imperialism, has been central to the constitution of Caribbean polity, economy, labor systems, national and transnational relations, and social relations. Explore how empire has shaped any one of these aspects by comparing and contrasting the modes of governance, the institutions established, or the relations of power established under two empires. You may select from the Spanish, French, British, American, or Dutch empires. (Alternatively, you may choose to write on the differences between the island Caribbean and the circum-Caribbean. What is at stake in claiming Caribbean history, of using the Caribbean as a primary conceptual framework? And how do you evaluate the question of which countries or polities might have a greater claim on the term “Caribbean”?)