PART ONE: Answer one of the following:

1. Assess the accuracy of the following statement with reference to works from as many different sections of your reading list as possible:

The last 25 years of scholarship in Native American history has brought forward two major themes: the ongoing Indian struggle to preserve sovereign authority over their communities in the face of European and American colonialism and the multifaceted (and changing) nature of tribal culture. It is ironic, then, that scholars have thus far been unable to bridge or resolve these twin themes. On the one hand, some historical narratives focus on the “struggle for sovereignty” by describing political actors and legal disputes, assuming all the while that the “goal” of Indian people is to attain this status (which is defined by European and American law). Other narratives describe the powerful themes of family, community, religion, alliance and identity, assuming that political power in the Euro-American sense is relatively unimportant. As a consequence, these twin approaches to the Native past run on parallel tracks, seldom speaking to each other.

2. It has been nearly a century since anthropologists rejected the term “tribe” as both ahistorical and patronizing. There was—and remains—a broad consensus that the term has an inevitable evolutionary connotation: that tribes are somehow a lesser stage of political organization, mid-way between prehistoric “bands” and modern “nations.” It is surprising then, that so many authors continue to use the term—and the category—of tribe in their work. Why? In what settings (if any) does this concept make sense and where does it not? Explain your answer with broad reference to your reading list.

PART TWO: Answer two of the following (and cite specifically relevant titles from your reading list):

1. Race has been a problematic theme in Native American history. Some see the term as irrelevant to indigenous experience; others defend this category of analysis in all settings, including in Indian affairs. How would you guide a newcomer to the field through this debate?

2. It appears that Native American scholarship has become more integrated into colonial history than other fields of study. What lessons does this fact offer for historians working in other fields? How might Native history become more visible in scholarship on the 19th and 20th centuries or on other non-colonial topics?

3. Which of the authors on your reading list might endorse the following statement—and which would argue against it: “The law has defined Indian people throughout the centuries of their contact with outsiders. Law has been an
instrument of both oppression and liberation and it has been an inevitable feature of Native life.”

4. Like other fields, Native American history has witnessed the evolution of “women’s history” into the history of gender. Historians have now produced significant work on the role of gender in indigenous life. What are the principle insights of this new scholarship? How might it be applied to areas of your reading list where it is not well represented?