Race & Ethnicity

Please answer the early American question in SECTION A and two of the questions in SECTION B in essays bringing historical and historiographical knowledge to bear on the issues raised. Please choose at least one question from among the last three.

Section A

1) In the colonial history of what became the U.S, major works have addressed the question of which came first, slavery or racism. Discuss your views on this debate based on a review of the relevant literatures. What do particular categories of analysis, such as gender, add to the debate? Might the existing literature permit us to now raise better and more precise questions?

Section B

1) How has the emergence of scholarship on U.S. Empire impacted work on racial formations within the United States? Has the addition of the concept of empire produced new understandings of U.S. racial ideologies or simply situated them more deeply in a global context? How have studies of immigration changed through a deeper interrogation of imperialism?

2) Understanding race as largely defined by a binary opposition between black and white has been commonplace in U.S. culture as well as among many historians. How effective have recent historians been in challenging this binary? How successful have they been in integrating the histories of people of color outside the black community into their narratives? Has this work largely supplanted or altered the binary view of race common amongst scholars? Should it?
3) Address the ways in which studies of racial categories and the history of “whiteness” have transformed immigration studies. What impact do the applications of these concepts to immigration studies have on the assimilationist model of immigration? How has scholarship emphasizing race and whiteness changed the assimilationist narrative of US immigration history?

4) While political, economic, and social determinations of and conflicts over racial and ethnic categories have been central to scholars accounts of their history, culture has also played an important role in understanding how these categories are understood, mobilized, embraced and debated. Discuss at least three important dimensions of the cultural politics of race and ethnicity, identifying how these politics augment our understanding of the role of race and ethnicity in defining citizenship, the politics of labor, empire, and/or gender.

5) How has the “spatial turn” in US history shaped the study of race and ethnicity. What lived spaces and spatial scales have been most important? What difference do they make to understanding the history and politics of racial and ethnic categories as ascribed or self-defined identities?