Race & Ethnicity Fall 2010

Please answer one question from each section in a pointed essay supported by strong evidence.

PART ONE

1. Recent historians of slavery have argued that the lens of gender is essential for understanding slave communities and slavery in colonial and antebellum America. Do you agree with this claim? What benefits has a gendered analysis of slavery in these periods provided? How does including gender as a category of analysis change the whole story of U.S. slavery?

2. One of the great debates about the origins of race and racism in the U.S. is, simply put, “Which came first, slavery or racism?” Discuss your opinions on this debate based on your review of the relevant literatures. What do particular categories of analysis, such as gender, add to the debate?

PART TWO

1. Much historical work that attempts global comparisons of race relations examines the emergence of racial paradigms in the U.S. (particularly the Antebellum and Jim Crow South), South Africa (particularly Apartheid), and Brazil. How useful are these comparisons, and the particular structural categories presented that have influenced the racial outcomes in each location? Consider other works that present different sites to contemplate racial/ethnic formations and understandings and what these may add to the discussion.

2. Histories of the U.S. empire engage heavily with how ideas and practices of race were reproduced and transformed as they circulated throughout the continental and overseas empire. How do these histories help to provide new frameworks for understanding constructions of race and racism? Among these histories, how do they differ in their conceptualizations of empire and race, and what are their limitations, if any?

PART THREE

Histories of race and racism in America have previously focused largely on Black/White relations and slavery. More histories are now contemplating racial formations as regionally specific and dynamic. These studies include discussions of the experiences of other people of color. How do histories of Asian Americans in particular expand our understandings of race and racial formations in the United States? How do these histories position Asian Americans socially/economically/culturally/politically in relation to whites, as well as other people of color?