Comparative Race and Ethnicity
Preliminary Field Exam
Spring 2014

Answer one question in each section. You must do a total of three (3) questions. Be sure each essay has a clear line of argument, addresses as many dimensions of the question as possible, and offers relevant, persuasive evidence from specific secondary sources wherever appropriate. Good luck!

I. Answer 1 (ONE) of the following two questions:

A. Your first teaching position is at a large public institution, with 16 week semesters, where there is a great deal of enthusiasm for the development of a course called “Comparative Histories of Race and Ethnicity” at the 200 level. How would you approach this task? What themes and authors would you emphasize? What kinds of assignments would you give to the students to help them grasp the stakes of doing comparative work for a subject which, to them, might look and feel mainly “North American”? Please note that a detailed syllabus (weekly readings, page numbers, etc.) is not required. Write a rationale for the course and enumerate 3 major sections, elaborating on your themes with 3 books and 3 articles for each.

B. Taking as a launching-off point W.E.B. DuBois’ concept of double-consciousness for African Americans in the United States and the writings of scholars from the African diaspora within the Anglophone Caribbean like C.L.R. James about the construction of black subjectivity and identity, examine how the construction of racial and ethnic identity reveals the workings of power, whether in an imperial or nation-state setting. Additionally, how does the role of language impact notions of blackness in the US Empire in comparison to the British Empire? How does the scholarship on brownness and Latinos, on Asians and Asian Americans, along with that on indigeneity complicate our understanding of race, nation (both in terms of ethnicity and nation-state), and empire?

II. Answer 1 (ONE) of the following two questions:

A. Citizenship has been as much a means of inclusion as one of exclusion when one considers the workings of Empire and nation-state building. Taking into account the workings of the American, British, and Spanish empires, analyze the manner the intersection of race and gender informs the construction of difference as it pertains to the effort to define citizenship by nation-states as well as in the various ways that individual groups seek to claim/obtain citizenship.
B. What is the right and proper role of empire – as an explanatory category, a historical force and a historiographical argument – in the making of comparative histories of race and ethnicity? For that matter, which empires (British, Spanish, American) merit consideration and how do their comparative waxing and waning over time and space impact the question of how much weight to accord them in shaping of both the histories that exist, and those you wish to write and teach?

III. Answer 1 (ONE) of the following two questions:

A. Scholarly examination of race and ethnicity (inclusive of whiteness) has evolved with greater attention to transnational and global movement of people, culture, labor, and capital, among others. Design a mid-level undergraduate syllabus around the concept of the Global Color Line in the long twentieth century. Discuss what themes and course objectives would you use to organize this syllabus and why? What are the key texts you would assign and what do you hope each would achieve? How would your syllabus account for (counteract) the privileging of the role of nation-states and their sovereignty in drawing their boundaries in popular understanding about how race and ethnicity matter?

B. Anglophone histories of race and empire are arguably a drag on genuinely comparative, national and/or global histories of race and ethnicity. Consider this proposition and make a case that draws on at least 3 of the 5 organizing rubrics you have used to construct this field (you may use work from across your list, but try to think through the categorical imperatives you have created).