Prelim Exam on U.S. Empire
February, 2015

You should answer three of the following questions, at least one from each set. Be sure to pick questions that will enable you to discuss a wide range of scholarship without much repetition from answer to answer.

Set 1

A) How can we compare U.S.-Latin American relations to U.S. relations with other peoples, nations, and empires in the Pacific region? What are the major areas of overlap, divergence, and causal connection?

B) Evaluate Greg Grandin’s claims in Empire’s Workshop that “Latin America did more than serve as a staging ground for the United States’ early push toward empire” – that the region “provided a school where foreign policy officials and intellectuals could learn to apply what political scientists like to call ‘soft power’…” (3). More specifically, how does Grandin’s thesis fit with other assessments of the origins, nature, and geography of U.S. power?

Set 2

A) How have Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease’s call for more attention to cultures of U.S. imperialism and Thomas Bender’s call to rethink American history in a global age played out in relation to each other? In other words, drawing on a handful of books inspired by these scholars, how have these two movements intersected and diverged and with what consequences?

B) How have studies of American empire that focus on gender and sexuality challenged or supported the thesis that the liberal tradition in nations such as the United States will lead to equal rights for all?

Set 3

A) How have historians conceptualized understandings of citizenship and sovereignty in the United States since 1800? How have these shifting definitions affected definitions of space and territory, state management of racially diverse populations, and the projection of American economic interests?

B) How would you periodize the history of American empire? In answering this question, you should consider how scholarship focusing on human mobility would factor into this periodization.