US National Exam

February, 2013

Write essays, drawing on your reading, to answer a total of three of the following questions. You must choose at least one from each section. Good Luck!

A: Nineteenth Century

1. Some historians believe the Civil War marked a major turning point in U.S. economic, social and cultural (including gender), legal, and political history. Discuss the pros and cons of such a claim, citing historians with different views on the subject, and explain your own opinion.

2. The question of the “agency” of the seemingly powerless has long been a subject of interest to historians. Discuss the meaning and value of this question and the different ways that four authors you read treat that subject as it applies to various aspects of 19th-century US history.

3. Discuss the decade of the 1890s as a watershed in terms of the structure of the economy, race and class relations, foreign policy, and electoral politics. What marks the decade as a departure from what came before and how did it set a stage for what came after

B: Twentieth Century

1. Consider two great periods of liberal reform in the twentieth century – the New Deal and the Great Society of the 1960s. In what ways did the federal government become more intrusive in its efforts to confront social problems in each era? How did the social movements of these periods produce and shape the reform legislation in each?

2. Explain the roots of the Cold War and its decline. Provide two examples you see as typical Cold War interventions by the US and two situations you see as major turning points in this conflict. What motivated the US in its policies during the Cold War and if that struggle is over, what motivates the policies now?

3. Who were the Progressives and what were they trying to do?