Directions: Answer one question from Part I and two questions from Part II. You must do a total of three (3) questions. Each of your essays should include both a discussion of the history (content) and historiography. Your historiographical discussion may include assessments of the literature and preferably include titles and publication dates in parenthesis. 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.

Before you begin writing, you may want to take a moment to think about your essay and outline your answer. Good luck!

Part I. Answer one question from Part I

1. Urban historians have long debated whether and to what extent towns and cities or urban places are sites, mere places in which transformative social processes occur or whether they themselves are engines stimulating and shaping social transformation. Given your work on Atlanta, Georgia, where do you side in this historical debate?

In your account of the African American experience in Atlanta, Georgia from the late 19th through the late 20th century was the city of Atlanta mostly just a site in which African Americans struggled against racial oppression and class exploitation, or were their struggles motivated and impacted by the city’s built environment, spatial organization, governance structure and development policies, etc.?

In answering this question you should do three things: 1) briefly discuss the historiography on which this is debate is framed; trace the development and configuration of Atlanta’s African American community in spatial terms from about 1870 to 1990; and 3) examine in detail two specific struggles in which you assess whether the city was merely a site or whether its processes were instrumental in creating the struggle and shaping its direction and influencing its outcome.

2. In reflecting on the transformation of U.S. cities over the long 20th century, in what ways does attention to region matter? In drafting your response, consider the different historiographical arguments that conceptualized the impact the rise of cities had on our understanding of its residents and on urban history as a whole. Discuss key works that push urban historians to consider the particularities of region as well as works that challenge how an emphasis on the South, North, West, or the Midwest region might obfuscate more than clarify the evolution of
US cities, specifically the manner that those who reside in them sought to transform the city.

Part II: Please answer two of the three questions below.

1. In a seminal article on African American urban history, in 1968, historian Gilbert Osofsky elaborated the thesis from his recent book, *Harlem: The Making of a Ghetto*. He claimed substantive change had occurred in African Americans’ “status and race relations,” since the Jacksonian era, however, he further observed that despite these changes, “the essential structure and nature of the Negro ghetto has remained remarkably durable.” Osofsky therefore concluded, “There has been a unending and tragic sameness about Negro life in the metropolis over the two centuries.” Osofsky’s observations sparked a paradigm or school of scholarship that came be known as the “ghetto synthesis.” While one could argue that aspects of it can be found in work prior to Osofsky, it is clear that after the publication of his work it emerged as the dominant paradigm in African American urban history for two decades.

Describe and analyze the major themes of the ghetto synthesis and trace its development as an analytical framework across time from its roots through Osofsky’s elaboration of its key features through an engagement with its major scholars and works to Arnold Hirsch and contemporary scholars.

2. African American urban history when combined with urban studies is perhaps the largest single area of scholarship in African American Studies. Conceptual and methodological developments in this subfield often influence the theoretical paradigms and methodologies that come to shape research and teaching in African American history and Black Studies more broadly. Three such concepts are *agency*, *community building*, and *proletarianization*. Trace the development of these three concepts and their rise to paradigmatic status in the subfield of African American urban history from the publication of W.E.B. Du Bois’s *The Philadelphia Negro* in 1899 to contemporary scholarship. Be sure to chart the seminal works, major historiographic trends, and to highlight the dialogue between advocates of agency, community and/or proletarianization and other scholars and schools of thought.

3. Congratulations! You have been hired as a new assistant professor of history at a large southern research university. Your new department chair asks you to develop a new, semester-long US Urban History course to be taught at the 100-level that will hopefully draw about 150 students who are a mix of majors and non-majors. Describe this new and exciting course by providing:
   a. a 2-page rationale for the course that includes the broad course objectives and its organization
   b. the 3 or 4 major subsections of the course, with major readings for each subsection and what you aim for that section to impart
c. a media component or group project that will allow students to engage the course objectives in a way that showcases their understanding of your course’s objectives

d. writing assignments that you would assign to your students, such as the topic of a midterm term paper or final project