U.S. in the World

General instructions:
You should answer three questions total, one from each pair. Since coverage matters in an exam of this nature, you should try to pick questions that will enable you to discuss as wide a range of scholarship as possible.

Pair 1:
Examining the literature of 1898, compare and contrast how a traditional international relations model would approach the relationship between “culture” and “politics” and how social history and cultural history approaches have done so. What are the explanatory strengths of each approach? Explore the weaknesses.

Thinking especially from the vantage point of “transnational” subjects (whether they are hegemonic elites or subalterns), how would you assess the changes to historical thinking augured by transnationalism? Discuss and explain the fundamental questions that it raises. What contributions has it made to our understanding of these questions? Finally, argue whether or not it has reached its fullest potential as a new thematic in the field.

Pair 2:
How would you design an introductory survey course on U.S./Latin American relations? In answering this question, you should do the following: outline key course topics, readings, and assignments; explain the rationale for these topics, readings, and assignments; discuss what you see as the central pedagogical challenges in designing a course on this topic; and comment on whether the host department – Latin American Studies, Global Studies, or History -- would affect the nature and content of the course, and if so, how.

Nick Salvatore’s essay in Close Encounters of Empire marked a moment of in the study of U.S. relations with Latin America, calling attention to the proliferation in cultural studies of empire and the need to further assess the “representational machines” through which U.S.-Latin American relations have been experienced. Several years later, Greg Grandin’s synoptic treatment, Empire’s Workshop, framed Latin America as ever the “workshop” for U.S. imperial policies, institutions, and military strategies that were then pursued elsewhere. Within the frames of reference defined by these two different perspectives, between the seemingly “cultural” and the “strategic,” explain the trends in the historiography of U.S.-Latin American relations.

Pair 3:
How have cultural and social history approaches affected our understanding of the United States in the world during the Cold War? What new issues have these approaches brought to the fore and how have they altered older understandings of power and politics and the relations between domestic and foreign affairs during this time period? And finally, what are some of the limitations or shortcomings to recent scholarship written in these veins?

Does it make sense to interpret U.S. foreign relations history in terms of major turning points, or more in terms of long-term continuities? In answering this question, you should be sure to consider what some turning points and continuities might be. You also should be sensitive to changing understandings of what “U.S. foreign relations history” might imply.