Choose at least one question from each section below (three questions in all) and write responses supporting a clear analysis with ample and well-chosen evidence.

SECTION ONE:

1. James Madison said that slavery was already a (perhaps the) major divisive factor at the constitutional convention in Philadelphia. And Thomas Jefferson thought that a dispute over slavery was about to destroy the Union in 1820. Somehow, however, slaveholding and non-slaveholding states managed to form a common constitution at Philadelphia, weather the storm of 1820, and hold together for an additional forty years. Discuss how and why this prolonged unity proved possible -- as well as what changed to finally destroy it. Take into account the economic, social, cultural, and political dimensions of this question.

2. The Lincoln administration embarked upon the Civil War with a narrowly-framed goal -- to reunite the country. By 1869, however, the Republican party’s program had gone far beyond that modest goal. Then, over the following decade and a half, that same party retreated substantially from its most ambitious plans for transforming the South and the Union. First account for the broadening of the Republicans’ goals between 1861 and 1869. Then give your explanation for the defeat of/retreat from Reconstruction.

3. One historian has recently written, “Until about 40 years ago, most historians of slavery concentrated on the master-slave relationship as the center of their story, whether seeing that relationship as brutal or benign. Beginning in the late 1960s, a new history placed the slave-slave relationship, and the slave community, at the center of slavery’s story.” Do you agree with this characterization? Insofar as it has force, which historians might typify the older historiography? Which historians most tellingly changed the story by focusing on the slave community? What are the strengths and limitations of each approach and what are the prospects for combining them?

SECTION TWO

1. Historians have recently been at pains to point out that years ending in “0” or even “00” do not necessarily signal the move from one historical period to the next, so that terms like the “short twentieth century” or the “long 1960s” become common. Given this flexibility, how would you periodize when the nineteenth century ended and the twentieth century began in U.S. history? Take into account especially the readings you have done on empire, racial oppression, and political/economic history? How might various authors specify turning points and describe the change from one period to the next?

2. One historian argued some time ago that if labor history has had a “race problem” (that is, has been too ready to collapse questions of race into those of class) African American history has had a “class problem,” in that it has ignored what Robin Kelley has called “intraracial class conflict.” Use a range of examples from
works addressing the late nineteenth through the twentieth centuries to assess how much either or both of these problems might impact scholarship in Black history and in labor history. What works decisively transcend such separations of race from class?

3. You contemplate a dissertation on Black labor in the Midwest in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Discuss two books from other time periods and/or other regions that will inspire and inform your work at the level of methodology, theory, and/or use of sources. What will you specifically take from each?