United States since 1830 major field preliminary exam, 9/24/13
Examiners Kristin Hoganson and Fred Hoxie

Answer one question from each pair. You should be sure to pick questions that will enable you to discuss a wide range of historical scholarship over the course of your exam.

Pair 1

1. The histories of slavery and emancipation on the one hand and westward expansion on the other are typically taught in separate chapters in textbooks or in separate courses in the curriculum. This habit is somewhat surprising since these topics generally overlap chronologically. How might the period from 1848 to 1890 be taught in a way that emphasizes the linkages between the histories of slavery and emancipation and the history of U.S. expansion across the Trans-Mississippi West?

2. “Settler colonialism” may soon retire the trophy for the most frequently dropped, yet least often defined, concept in modern historical analysis. Many aspects of U.S. history are now tagged as representative of a "settler colonial" project but those different "tags" often clash with one another. What are the essential features of "settler colonialism“ and how does this analytical construction help us evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of recent historical writing on the Jacksonian era, the conquest of the American West, and race relations in the 20th century?

Pair 2

1. In Rethinking American History in a Global Age, Thomas Bender urges historians to historicize the nation, in part by imagining “a spectrum of social scales, both larger and smaller than the nation and not excluding the nation.” Taking the topic of Progressive Era social politics as your case study, how well have historians of the United States historicized the nation, and how have their choices of scale affected their interpretations?

2. How have histories of gender and sexuality intersected with U.S. empire and foreign relations histories, and with what consequences for each of these fields?

Pair 3

1. How has recent scholarship on consumption affected our understandings of capitalism and class formation from the early nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth? In answering this question, you should evaluate the ways that historians have periodized the history of consumption and the ways that they have conceptualized consumer agency.

2. For a generation historians of Native America have called for the integration of U.S. and American Indian history. Much of the thrust of the "New Indian History” has been to raise issues that should concern all historians of the United States. Reflecting on those scholars who have successfully linked the Indian story to larger themes in American life as well on those who have ignored those linkages, how successful have historians of modern America been in integrating these two narratives? When this integration has fallen short, explain why.