For your prelim exam, three essays must be written. For each essay, your answer should incorporate a discussion of both historiography (including scholars’ names, titles, and publication dates) and historical events and content. Your answers should also, of course, include your own assessments and critiques of the scholarship in question. Be sure to avoid duplicating your discussion of specific scholars and books in your essays. If you think that your answers will be nearly identical, then you should choose a different question. The goal of the prelim is to display the breadth and depth of your knowledge and your own critical thinking.

Select one question from each group of questions to answer. Your third question may be selected from either group. In at least one of your essays, you must cover the pre-1815 period in depth along with the 19th–20th centuries.

Please include the question on your exam.

**Essay Questions**. **At least one question must be selected from this group, 1-4.**

1. Reproduction involves both bodily and social experience. That is to say, women’s physical and intellectual experiences of reproduction are shaped by corporeal, material, and discursive practices that reflect historically specific understandings of the female body and the relationship between the body and society.

   Do you agree with this statement? If so, explain 1) how historical experiences of reproduction were shaped by ideas and practices surrounding the female body and its relationship to society and 2) how those ideas reflected the historically contingent ways gender, race, class, and sexuality interlocked with one another. Your answer should cover the colonial era through the twentieth century.

   If you disagree with the above statement, develop your own definition of reproduction and explain its historicity and its intersectionality with the key categories of difference.

2. How did urban spaces operate as sites of gender and sexual formation? To answer this question, select several examples (encompassing both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries) from your readings. Discuss 1) how each author defines the term, “urban space,” as both a conceptual construct and a structure of power that tangibly organizes people’s lived experiences and 2) how individuals and groups unsettled traditional gender and sexual conventions by entering and engaging with urban spaces.

3. Historians have produced a rich body of scholarship on sexuality in U.S. history from the colonial era to the twentieth century. Examine how scholarly discussion on the history of sexuality has evolved over time. Your answer should include discussion of how historical
studies of sexuality have contributed to our understanding of the history of gender in the United States.

4. Identify major themes that dominate in the scholarly works on women of color. Does the prevalence of certain themes limit the range of positions assigned to women of color as historical subjects? How is sexuality discussed in this body of literature; does the history of racism and the construction of race structure the analysis or illuminate the history of sexuality in specific ways?

Comparative Questions. At least one question must be selected from this group, 5-7.

5. Chart how scholars have examined the trajectories of imperial and colonial histories through the lens of gender and sexuality. How useful are gender and sexuality as categories of analysis in examining colonialism and imperialism?

6. Trace the history of masculinity in Europe and American from the early modern period through the twentieth century and assess the development of the field. What are the similarities and differences in the approaches, theories, questions, and methods in the American and European histories of masculinity? Be sure to remark on major debates within the field and any points that you think one group of scholars should learn from another.

7. Judith Walkowitz has written some of the most sophisticated and influential work in the field of the history of women, gender, and sexuality. Explain Walkowitz’s contributions, influence, and how her scholarship has changed over time. How has her work both reflected changes in the historical thought and changed how historians (not only in Britain) have approached their own research? Give specific examples of the transformations in Walkowitz’s scholarship and her influence on other scholars.