

U.S. to 1830
Preliminary Examination
Fall 1999

INSTRUCTIONS: Write three essays, choosing one topic from each of the following groups. Discuss the relevant historical literature where appropriate.

Section I

A. English settlers in North America had no trouble enslaving Native Americans as well as Africans in the seventeenth century but eventually stopped their enslavement of Native Americans in the eighteenth century while the enslavement of Africans greatly increased. Discuss and explain this development.

B. Oscar and Mary Handlin argued in 1950 that "The status of Negroes [in Virginia] was that of servants; and so they were identified and treated down to the 1660's." How have recent historians changed or modified this view and how have they reinterpreted the relationship between slave and free labor in the Chesapeake?

Section II

A. Assess Perry Miller's contributions to the historical profession's understanding of Puritan New England. To what extent have his contributions been qualified or contradicted by subsequent researchers?

B. Suppose that you are teaching a graduate-level course on selected problems in Early American history, and that you have decided to spend one of the weekly meetings on colonial society around the year 1750. What readings would you assign? What issues would you want the class to address and, perhaps, resolve?

Section III

A. Discuss the "Era of Good Feelings" and its relationship to the development of the American party system, including significant political events and formations that preceded and followed it and their relevance to an American political tradition.

B. "From the 1780's into the 1810's, the major, and continuing, political division in the United States was between those who favored states' rights and those who favored centralized authority." Discuss and explain

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Answer one question in each of the three sections.
Section I

1. Linda Kerber in *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* argued that “republican ideology concerned a single sex rather than an American community of both sexes... Women were thought to make their moral choices in the context of the household, a woman’s domain that Aristotle understood to be a non-republic... Having learned from Aristotle that politics was the affair of men, Americans continued to discuss political affairs in terms that largely excluded women...” She then asks, “How did the Revolution affect women?” and responds that “This is a difficult question to answer.” That is, however, what her book is about. Could you venture an answer to that question, using her work and that of others who have written on the subject.
More broadly, how have books written from a “gender” perspective changed, if at all, how we view the whole period of early American history?
2. Peter H. Wood began his pathbreaking *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* with the reflection that “African Slaves, if taken together, were the largest single group of non-English-speaking migrants to enter the North American Colonies in the pre-Revolutionary era. Indeed, they were the earliest of any major contingent of ethnic immigrants to reach the continent from across the Atlantic. The proportion of Negroes in the population would never again be so high as it was during the eighteenth century. And yet none of these facts was reflected in the history which I had read.” To what extent, if any, would you say that this situation has changed? Why? On what evidence do you base your argument?

Section II

1. In his influential *The Middle Ground. Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (NYC, 1991), Richard White asserts the fragile persistence of “an odd imperialism where mediation succeeded and force failed, where colonizers gave gifts to the colonized and patriarchal metaphors were the heart of politics” between the mid-seventeenth through the mid-eighteenth century (p. 145). Implicit in this statement is a critique of the practice, the assumptions as well as (of course) the interpretations of earlier historical writing on the relations between Native Americans and settlers.
Your task is two-fold: sketch the historiography against which White situates his own work and point out complementary (or rival) approaches to Native-newcomer interactions from which White seems to refrain. Make sure to phrase your answer in terms of social experience.
2. Dr. Alexander Hamilton concluded his *Itinerarium* (1744) with the following summary impression: “In this itineration I completed, by land and water together, a course of 1624 miles. The northern parts I found in general much better settled than the southern. As to politeness and humanity, they are much alike except in the great towns where the inhabitants are more civilized, especially at Boston” (in *Colonial American Travel Narratives*, ed. Wendy Martin, (NYC, 1994), P. 327). A close reading of Hamilton’s observations would likely generate a great many regional differences, and yet a few notable exceptions can not dissimulate the reluctance with which historians of colonial North America approach regional comparisons.

Elaborate on the advantages of a history attentive to variations in time (rhythms of development) and space (variability of topography) in colonial history. Use examples (forms of political culture, slavery, religion, etc.)! You might want to couch your answer in terms of obstacles that “regionalism” opposed to the emergence of a North-American self-awareness in the colonial period.