

Fall 1995

PH.D. PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION: HISTORY OF COLONIALISM

This is a four hour examination for which you have a total of five hours. Be sure to spend at least the minimum amount of time suggested under each of the following sections. Also, be sure to discuss specific scholars and scholarly works where appropriate.

I. Answer A (suggested time: two hours)

A. "Linked together colonialism and culture can be seen to provide a new world in which to deploy a critical cartography of the history and effects of power."

--Nicholas B. Dirks

With this statement Dirks suggests that the anthropological concept of culture and the history of colonialism might cast perspective on older cartographies of power. Discuss this statement paying particular attention to the differences between studies which privilege economic and political factors and those which foreground cultural or discursive factors. What are the positions of those who write these works, the debates among them, and their points of contact? Do you think the dialogue between history and anthropology advances our study of colonialism? Why? How?

II. Answer A or B (suggested time: one hour)

A. Edward Said and Timothy Mitchell present two related (but in many ways divergent) critiques of the west's power to represent and reconstruct non-western cultures. What are the common strengths of these approaches, and how do they relate to larger issues within recent European theory? How do these and other theorists apply, for example, Foucault's notion of power/knowledge to the realm of imperialist discourse about colonial others? Doesn't such an emphasis on texts (discourse) move away from context (history)? While moving away from "laws and instances" and towards "cases and interpretations" to what extent is it possible to maintain a politically grounded critique of colonialism, a critique that would view, for example, contemporary transnational capitalism as an instance of "late" colonialism?

B. How would you define postcolonial studies? Where would you situate it historiographically in terms of cultural and intellectual history? To the extent that it constitutes a "revisionist" interpretation of the history of colonialism, how would you characterize the more "traditional" approaches which it revises? To focus your

discussion, you might choose four or five key texts for in-depth analysis.

III. Answer A (suggested time: one hour)

A. To what extent does postcolonial studies inform your own Ph.D. dissertation research? Discuss the extent to which the relationship between the nation state and the frontier - both in the sense of historical occupation of another's lands and in the continuing context of asymmetrical relations of trade and culture -- points to a connection between your studies and those of others interested in colonial/postcolonial power relations.

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B. How would you define postcolonial studies? Where would you situate it historically, especially in terms of cultural and intellectual history? Do you agree that it constitutes a "revisionist" interpretation of the history of colonialism, how would you conceptualize the more "traditional" approaches which it revises? To focus your

