

History 80010 The Literature of American History to 1865

Essay Examination

December 2017

*Please choose **two** of the questions from those listed below, one from Part One and one from Part Two. Please prepare your answers in an essay format. Citations are not necessary unless quoting, and can be informal for any work on the course syllabus. You will have eight hours during which to write your essays and submit them as e-mail attachments to Marilyn Weber: mweber@gc.cuny.edu*

Part I

1. Traditionally, for both the colonial and antebellum periods, regional developments are considered to be central, even while national ones come into play for the Revolutionary and “early national” periods. Discuss at least two ways in which the recent attention to atlantic, continental, transnational, or imperial dimensions may change stories of, and/or relationships among, regional, sectional, or national history up to 1865.
2. “Early American History” once meant the colonial period; for while it meant the Revolutionary era too; increasingly it includes the “early republic,” up to the Civil War or even sometimes 1900. Is the period up to 1865 marked more by continuities or changes? Does your answer suggest an early-ness, or antiquity, to a part of the period, or to all of it, or rather does it point to continuities that encompass most or all of US history?

Part II

3. In 1986 Joan Wallach Scott argued for gender as “a useful category of historical analysis,” i.e. not just for the history of women. After more than thirty years, has US historiography before 1865 proved, disproved, neglected, adapted or inflected her point? What difference has attention to gender or women made? What interpretations has it changed or enhanced, or not affected, and how?
4. In 1990 Nathan Irvin Huggins called for an end to the “master narrative” of American history, praising Edmund Morgan and some other historians for providing a beginning. Is there a new narrative now – perhaps an enslaved’s narrative, and/or a natives’ narrative? If so, what are its key features, strengths, limits?