

**The Graduate Center -- Ph.D. Program in History**

**First-Year Examination in American History**

**May 21, 2019 (9:00 am to 5:00 pm)**

Answer two of the following four questions.

Your answers should be in essay form and clearly expressed and coherently organized. Each essay should include sufficient historical detail to build a persuasive argument. You should avoid the use of unsupported generalizations, as well as material that does not fortify your argument. The essays should draw on (and cite) those works and authors that have enriched your understanding of the argument you wish to advance. You may discuss differences of interpretation, but make sure you offer your own.

1. In the introduction to *The Republic For Which It Stands: The United States During Reconstruction and the Gilded Age, 1865-1896*, Richard White writes that “the home became the beating heart of an expansive political program . . . Home embodied all the gendered and racialized assumptions of American republicanism and the American economy.” White is referring specifically to the period of 1865 to 1896, but several of the authors we have read this semester would extend his argument on the centrality of the ideology of home and family to encompass political programs and social policies through the 20<sup>th</sup> into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Choose three examples, in different time frames, which illustrate and confirm White’s argument. Choose one example which counters or disputes White’s contention.

2. Mae Ngai has written that “law not only reflects society but constitutes it as well.”

Choose three instances in U.S. history from Reconstruction to the present where the law, as written by state legislatures and Congress and interpreted by the courts, has played a central and essential role in the formulation of social policy. Provide one instance in which the law might not have played as central a central role in the formulation of social policy.

3 Trace the rise of and resistance to what Daniel T. Rodgers has called “the interventionist state.” Focus on at least three periods from Reconstruction to the present and discuss the parameters of the debate and of the political mobilization that occurred over the proper role of the federal government in fostering economic development, defining and protecting individual rights, and promoting social justice.

4. Identify and discuss one of the follow themes, issues, through-lines that you believe to be essential to an understanding of U.S. history from Reconstruction to the present. How, in teaching an introductory U.S. history course, might you use this theme as a framework to make connections and demonstrate change over time?

You may choose from the list of “themes” below:

Capitalism and its discontents

The persistence of and struggle against racial discrimination

The persistence of and struggle against economic inequality

The persistence of and struggle against gender and/or sexual discrimination