

## Hist. 80010-01 Literature of American History to 1865

### Fall 2020: Essay Examination

December 15, 2020

Please answer **TWO** of the questions from those listed below, one from Part I and one from Part II. Both parts of the exam are weighted equally. Your answers should be in essay form. Each essay should make a clear, coherent, and persuasive argument that is supported with specific historical evidence and/or discussions of differing historiographical interpretations. Citations are not necessary unless quoting, and can be informal for any work on the course syllabus.

You have eight hours (from 9am to 8pm) to write your essays and submit them as e-mail attachments to Marilyn Weber ([mweber@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:mweber@gc.cuny.edu)).

#### Part I

1. In 1974, shortly before the Bicentennial celebrations of the founding of the United States, John Murrin remarked, “The American people, everyone now agrees, are a nation. But we are more than a little perplexed about how and when it happened.” Do these fundamental historical questions of American nationhood still perplex us as we approach the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Declaration of Independence? What is a nation? How and when did Americans become one? How has the American nation evolved over time? And what role(s) did the American Revolution and the Civil War play in creating or shaping it?
2. Many of the authors on the course syllabus prioritize Atlantic, hemispheric, continental, imperial, entangled, or comparative dimensions of American history. Using multiple examples from the course readings for each, discuss and compare at least TWO of these dimensions. How do they reinforce and/or undermine more traditional national histories of the United States? Who do they include and exclude?

#### Part II

3. Some of the historians that we have read this semester analyze expansive, long-term institutions, processes, patterns, or structures. By contrast, others explore American history “on the ground,” paying close attention to individual lives or specific localities. What are the relative advantages and disadvantages of these opposite perspectives? How have some historians successfully combined what Christopher Grasso and Peter Mancall identify as “world and ground” levels of historical analysis?
4. Pick TWO of the following concepts and explain how they could function as complementary or antithetical organizing principles for a narrative of American history to 1865. Be sure to define your selected concepts.

- a. Capitalism
- b. Democracy
- c. Gender
- d. Modernity
- e. Pluralism
- f. Race
- g. Secularism