

Race and Ethnicity Qualifying Exam- Fall 2015

Area Exam: Race and Ethnicity

The race and ethnicity qualifying exam will be comprised of two four-hour sessions with two different sets of questions offered in each of the sessions. The first session will focus on core topics in sociology of race, and the second on the student's selected special-interest topics.

Each session requires students to answer two or three (2-3) out of two to four (2-4) possible questions. Students will develop essay answers to the questions, organizing support of a central thesis through discussion and assessment of their readings. At the conclusion of the exam period, the student will communicate their essays to the administrative assistant. Students may use an un-annotated copy of their reading list during the exam for reference.

Day 1: You must complete two essay questions. The first question is required. You may choose between three questions for the second essay.

Required Questions:

- 1) What is race? What is ethnicity? Are these distinct concepts? How have they emerged over time? Are race and ethnicity useful analytical concepts? Why or why not? Please be sure to think about these concepts critically, as both scholarly and folk concepts, historically and contemporarily, and as ideologies and as a set of group relations.

Please choose one:

- 1) How do theories of immigration and assimilation contribute to our understanding of racial formation and racial inequality in the United States? What is the relationship between immigration, politics, and group mobilization in the construction of U.S. citizenship and ethnoracial categories? How have varied histories of migration framed discussions of race and belonging? Who has been included or excluded in the U.S. conception of social citizenship?
- 2) Racial formation theories, boundary formation frameworks and ethnic formation theories have highlighted the ways in which race and ethnicity are produced over time. Classification scholars argue, however, that our methodological approaches often fail to account for the constructed nature of race. How are racial groups formed, created and inhabited? How should we as social scientists think about race? Measure it?
- 3) In recent decades, scholars have suggested that the U.S. color line is shifting due to immigration, increasing intermarriage, and other demographic changes. How is the racial landscape changing, if at all? Where does the new color line lie? Is there a new color line? How are racial boundaries shifting, if at all? How does the US Latina/o population fit into this shifting US race/ethnic paradigm? How do they compare to Asian-Americans?

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Day 2: You must complete two essay questions. The first question is required. You may choose between two questions for the second essay.

Required Question:

- 1) Is race a proxy for class or culture? Two competing explanations for differences in life outcomes of racial/ethnic groups have emerged- culture and structure. In particular, critical race theorists and structuralists argue that race is embedded in the law and social institutions, while culturalists and intergroup relations theorists argue that inequality is embedded in social relations. Critically analyze arguments from these two perspectives as sources of inequality. How are they similar? How are they distinct? Then, use the literature and empirical evidence to argue the relative validity of cultural and structural arguments as sources of inequality.

Please choose one:

- 2) Can race be thought of as an autonomous area of social life? Is race a foundational or epiphenomenal feature of modern society and social organization? How does race intersect with other key social identities and inequalities? What defines an intersectional approach to studying race?
- 3) How does race affect social institutions? How are social institutions shaped by race? How do institutions challenge or reduce racism? How do political and legal questions connected to race, such as "diversity" and "affirmative action" impact social institutions? To what extent is race a defining feature of U.S. social institutions?