

**Area Exam and Preparation Process:  
Race and Ethnicity (AY 2020-2021)**

**GUIDELINES**

We ask all students to do the following:

- *Speak to the committee chair well in advance of exams.*
  - If a student is interested in taking the race and ethnicity exam, they must speak to the committee chair early in the process to find out if they are available and whether they are teaching a course relevant to your exam. Preparation for exams should consist of a minimum of four months, not including recommended coursework.
  
- *Take a seminar on the topic of race and ethnicity.*
  - Students should have completed at least one graduate course related to sociology of race and ethnicity before beginning exam preparation (exceptions may be negotiated with the committee for students with strong prior background).
  
- *Carefully review the standardized reading list.*
  - Exam preparation begins with a standardized reading list, which the committee provides. The list builds upon what is covered in the sociology of race and ethnicity course. The goal of the standardized list is to make sure that students are familiar with the dominant theoretical perspectives, current debates, and the latest empirical research in the field. However, race/ethnicity is a broad subfield. All students must be familiar with the core topics.
  - Students should feel free to draw on readings that are not on this list if they are useful to them in writing effective exam responses.
  - Themes for the reading list include:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Historical Perspectives</li><li>● Racial Ontology</li><li>● Race, Ethnicity, and Immigration</li><li>● Contemporary Race Theory</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Intersectionality</li><li>● Institutions and Organizations</li><li>● Methodology</li></ul>
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**TIPS**

- *Write memos during your reading.*
  - Students should write short memos (1-page each, single-spaced) that identify the debates in the field, discussing how they fit in the field and offer some thoughts on where research and thinking must go. This is NOT a literature review, but a synthesis across readings (here think themes). Memos should not just summarize. Instead, they should reflect the student's comprehension of materials (not to be taken for granted!), the ability to put scholarship in conversation with one another, and the ability to discuss with competence the strengths and shortcomings of different perspectives.
  
- *Possible exam questions.*
  - Taking the sociology of race and ethnicity course will give you a sense of possible exam questions. You may also discuss with the committee members about the types

of questions that are typically asked. The committee will not provide the exact exam questions in advance.

- *Reading groups.*
  - We highly recommend that you do your exam preparation with a few colleagues, if possible. You can then debate reading lists together, and form a reading group. This helps keep you on track and lets you bounce ideas off each other.
- *Notes.*
  - We will allow for two single-spaced pages (12-pt font) of student-authored notes for the exam. Notes should not include full paragraphs or essay outlines and must be approved by the chair.

#### EXAM FORMAT

- The exam will take place in one six-hour session with three sets of questions. Each section will have two questions and requires that students answer one out of the two possible questions. Thus, students will write a total of three 5-6 page (12-pt font; double-spaced) essays.
- On the day of the exam, the administrative assistant for graduate studies will communicate the chosen questions to the student at the start of the exam. 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.

#### EXAM SCHEDULING

- Students will sit the exam at the time scheduled by the department. Typically, the preparation process should involve at least four months and preferably more, not including relevant coursework, so advance planning is required. The committee will write and offer **ONLY ONE EXAM** per semester. If a student fails the exam, they must wait until the next semester before they may retake this exam.

#### EXPECTATIONS REGARDING CITATIONS

- The committee prefers that students follow ASA guidelines regarding citations: author(s) and year of publication are preferable. Students are allowed to bring in the standardized reading list for reference. Additional readings should be cited to the students' best ability. However, the goal of this examination is not memorization. It is not necessary to provide a full bibliography.

#### EXAM RESULTS POLICIES REGARDING RE-WRITES

- Students will be assigned one of three grades for their exam: pass with distinction, pass, or fail. If students fail the exam, they may retake the area exam (in its entirety) after meetings with committee members to discuss ways to improve, and after devoting significant time to coming to a better understanding of the area with more preparation. Students may also choose to take a different area exam. Students will not be allowed to rewrite parts of their exams in order to change a failing grade to a passing one. They will, however, be encouraged to retake the area exam the next year (or at another appropriate time).

#### FEEDBACK

- Students will be notified of exam results by the committee chair, who will coordinate the reports of committee members. Every attempt will be made to provide results two weeks after the exam; however, this deadline may be extended if the exam date creates deadline conflicts for committee members. The committee chair will keep the student informed of when the

report is expected. After the committee renders its decision, the student will be notified of the results by e-mail. The student will then schedule a meeting with the committee chair to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the student's performance. This meeting will be scheduled for all students, regardless of whether they pass or fail the exam. Other committee members may provide written feedback to each student, or they may set up a separate meeting to discuss the students' exam performance. This decision will be left at the discretion of the faculty on the committee.