Comprehensive Examination in Gender
October 2006

DAY 1: General Questions. Answer two of these “two hour” questions.

1. West & Zimmerman’s theory of “doing gender” has been enormously popular among gender sociologists. Explain the theory, and discuss how it has been used by researchers studying gender. Discuss how the theory has been extended to apply to class and race. What are the strengths and limitations of this approach?

2. Patricia Hill Collins argues that researchers who consider the vantage point of African American women can gain deeper insight into gender oppression in general. Discuss her argument. Then provide examples of this from the literature. How have studies of black women enhanced the sociological understanding of gender?

3. What is Chandra Mohanty’s critique of “western feminism,” first published in her 1988 essay, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse?” How have developments in transnational feminism and feminist scholarship on immigrants worked to dismantle (according to Mohanty) the colonial discourse of “western feminism”?

4. What are the distinctive contributions of feminist methodology to sociology? Can you give some examples of how feminist methodologies have enhanced key sociological debates on labor, racial stratification, and the state?

5. Over the past thirty years, feminist sociology has offered different theoretical accounts of gender oppression. Review the history of these accounts, ending with your own understanding of the relationship between gender and power.