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Comprehensive Examination in Gender
April, 2004

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

1. Second wave feminists were charged with doing to women of color what men had done to women; that is, theorizing from their own racial/class standpoints and casting these theories as universal gendered social reality. First, what are the critiques of second wave feminism? Second, if gender is fundamentally splintered along race/class/sexual lines, then how can we continue coalitional politics as women?

2. R.W. Connell proposes a pioneering framework for examining gender. Based on Connell’s theorizing, develop a critical examination and comparison of the contributions and limitations of this perspective with regard to the following concepts: 1) hegemonic masculinity and the hierarchical ordering of masculinities; 2) emphasized femininity and marginalized forms of femininity; 3) gender as a relational process; and 4) race/ethnicity, class, and sexuality.

3. Discuss and critically evaluate the three major epistemologies examined by mainstream feminist theorists (i.e., empiricism, standpoint, and postmodernism). Evaluate and critique each one of them. Is this distinction useful? What are the pros and cons of this classification? How do the consideration of race, class, and sexual difference complicate these epistemological distinctions? For example, how do intersectionality and multiracial feminisms complicate and/or inform these epistemologies? Which perspective(s) most inform your own research? Why? Why not?

4. Discuss the various ways that sociologists have studied gender inequality. Explain how various scholars have defined gender inequality, and present their explanations for its persistence.