Comprehensive Examination in Gender
April 2008

DAY 2: Answer two of these two-hour questions

1. Angela McRobbie has argued that girls’ subcultures were invisible within early accounts of youth subcultural formation because the term “subculture” had come to acquire masculinist overtones. Critically evaluate the argument that subcultural theory as it developed in the 1970s marginalized girls’ experiences and discuss the proposition that the term subculture is of little analytical use in trying to understand girls’ leisure patterns and behaviors.

2. It has been argued that, for black people, sport, as a particular cultural practice, has historically functioned as a form of cultural resistance against white racism. Give examples to show how this has happened as well as the limits to this particular form of “resistance.” Pay particular attention to questions of gender in your answer.

3. Feminist scholarship has examined the sophisticated ways in which (1) heterosexuality and (2) women’s and men’s bodies are socially constructed. These examinations have exposed the ways in which these two analytical dimensions are mutually interconnected. Based on feminist scholarship on both women and men, offer a critical examination with regard to two of the following: (1) the medicalization of women’s and men’s bodies; (2) sports and masculinity; (3) sexual morality debates.

4. The recent proliferation of gay and lesbian characters in popular culture (e.g., television, movies) has led some to claim that the era of the “closet” is now over. Others see the mainstreaming of homosexuality as a form of “normalization,” arguing that gays and lesbians are accepted only if they affirm heteronormativity by distancing themselves from queer sexuality. Pick a popular TV series (e.g., L-word, Queer Eye for the Straight Guy, Will and Grace) and discuss how it either promotes or stymies the incorporation of gays and lesbians into mainstream culture. In your essay, explain your general views of the role of the mass media in promoting or impeding progressive social change.