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Comprehensive Examination in Gender  
April, 2004

DAY 2: Specific questions on sexuality/body/family. Answer two of these “two hour” questions

1. Anxieties about racial/ethnic community and family respectability almost invariably scrutinize the sexualities and sexual practices of young women within that particular group. Can you tell us how these anxieties are expressed, and how young women of color negotiate such kinds of sexual politics?

2. Based on feminist theories and research on women’s sex lives, identify the most prominent debates about women and sexuality with regard to the topic of sexual violence against women, pornography, or prostitution. What are the arguments presented by each perspective? What are their most important contributions and limitations with regard to our understanding of gender inequality? Do third wave feminisms overcome and/or complicate these discussions? How? To what extent?

3. Identify and examine the feminist debates in the cultural representation of women and sexuality in contemporary society. Drawing from both theory and research, explain and illustrate the ways in which these cultural images promote and/or challenge gender inequality. Examine the sophisticated ways in which culture may become a source of resistance and social transformation. You may incorporate your own research in your answer.

4. Motherhood has intensely personal meanings for individual women. But these meanings are shaped by a larger political context. Discuss the contemporary politics of mothering. Explain how the state defines who is a “good mother” and who is a “bad mother”. Discuss how these definitions have changed historically. Explain the impact of these definitions on different groups of mothers.