

## *SAMPLE EXAM QUESTIONS/PAPER TOPICS*

SO 227 Race and American Society  
Prof. James Hannon

1. One of the central theses of the course is that "color" in America has operated within an economic context (Takaki, *Strangers*, p. 13). With reference to Edna Bonacich's concept of "ethnic antagonism," demonstrate how economic considerations determined the racism directed against Chinese-Americans in the 19th century.
2. John Hope Franklin is the originator of the notion that four modes of oppression operated against African-Americans in the post-Civil War era. Identify these four modes of oppression and indicate how they operated against African-Americans or any other minority group in America.
3. For every racial group in America, one of the most difficult challenges has been developing a strategy for collective advancement.

These groups have often polarized around two opposing strategies--accommodation and self-improvement on one side and agitation and political organizing on the other. In the history of African-Americans these opposing strategies were visible even during slavery and were more clearly articulated in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

But these opposing strategies were also debated among second generation Japanese-Americans in the 1930's. Indicate the contours of the debate and, if possible, identify the individuals and/or organizations which advocated the opposing positions. Be sure to indicate any correlation between class status and adherence to a particular strategy.

4. Early in the course we discussed three conditions that are necessary and sufficient for the development of racism and racist stereotypes. Assuming that these conditions are central to the dynamics of racism, apply them to explain the negative characterizations of the sexuality of Chinese or Filipino men at various stages in American history. In your answer you might want to consider why these negative characterizations did not extend as often to Japanese men. Finally, would this analysis explain the negative characterization of the sexuality of African-American men? Are there other psychological dynamics that pertain more specifically in the case of African-Americans?
5. Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward have argued that "The poor gain more through mass defiance and disruptive protests than by organizing for electoral politics and other reform policies." How valid would this statement be if "racial minorities" was substituted for "the poor?" In your answer refer to the historical record and the successes and failures of movement leaders. Consider how the amended statement might be more or less correct in different historical periods. How valid is this statement in regard to the present period? Finally, suggest how Shelby Steele and W. J. Wilson would assess the validity of this statement.
6. Please provide a critical assessment of ONE of the following quotes. By critical assessment I mean that you should defend, attack or qualify the statement. In so doing you should refer to the

materials of the course. You should make specific reference to at least two of the following: Steele, Wilson, and Moraga & Anzaldua.

- a. "If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground....Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will." --Frederick Douglass
- b. "The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line,--the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea."  
-W.E.B. Dubois
- c. "All dreamers and sleepwalkers must pay the price, and even the invisible victim is responsible for the fate of all." -Ralph Ellison.
- d. "The moral arc of the universe is long but it bends toward justice."--Martin Luther King Jr.
- e. "Man, like all the other animals, fears and is repelled by that which he does not understand, and mere difference is apt to connote something malign." -- Alice Walker

7. Assume that you are an advisor to a candidate for president in 1996. You are asked to write a brief position paper on the plight of the urban underclass and the federal policies that could address their problems. With reference to Wilson's The Truly Disadvantaged and other readings that seem appropriate, provide this position paper which indicates the policies that should be pursued and the political strategy that will make these policies possible and help make your candidate electable.