

History 477

Final Exam Study Guide

FOUR of the following five questions will appear on the final exam. You will answer THREE. The exam will be open notes and open book (and will be graded with that in mind). You may type notes and print them, but you may not bring a computer into the classroom or consult any other kind of electronic device during the exam.

I encourage you to prepare outlines or bullet point notes to help you answer each of the questions on the final. In particular, you will want to jot down specific examples from the various readings that illustrate the larger points you will be trying to argue in your essays. You should also jot down how your examples illustrate your larger point. It is a poor use of your time to compose an entire essay and then transcribe it into the green book once you get into the exam, but I won't stop you from doing so.

If you have any questions or would like to talk with me about how best to prepare for this exam, I will be in the office Thursday afternoon and, as always, available through email.

1. How did popular culture provide relief for Americans who had to adjust to wrenching social and economic changes? In answering, you should discuss theater and the Bowery B'hoys; blackface minstrelsy and the sentimental ballads of Stephen Foster; Coney Island; and Vaudeville.
2. How did popular culture both reinforce and complicate white Americans' assumptions about race and white supremacy? In answering, you should discuss blackface minstrelsy; *Pudd'nhead Wilson*; Buffalo Bill's Wild West (particularly the Wild West Shows' use of Native Americans); *Tarzan of the Apes*; and Elvis Presley.
3. We have seen throughout this course that conceptions of the "ideal man" changed over time. How did these changing notions of what constituted the "ideal men" often reflect the preoccupations and attitudes of a particular historical moment? In answering, you should discuss Mose and the Bowery B'hoys; Buffalo Bill; *Tarzan of the Apes*, *The Maltese Falcon*, and Rudolph Valentino.
4. How did popular culture contribute to the erosion of Victorian values? In answering, you should identify what these values were and discuss how *The Greek Slave* and the circus; Coney Island; Vaudeville; and Mae West contributed to their erosion.
5. Popular culture, in order to be popular, usually reinforces or reflects the prejudices, preconceptions, and mainstream values of the times that produce it. In some cases, however, popular culture can be indirectly subversive. How did various forms of popular culture we have studied in this course loosen the constraints on what is "proper" entertainment or level a sharp critique of mainstream society through the use of humor? In answering, you should discuss P.T. Barnum's "attractions," Mark Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, the Marx Brothers' *Duck Soup*, Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times*, and the "sick" humor of post-World War II satirists.