

Final Exam Study Questions

Your final examination will be divided into two sections. The first section will consist of your ideas for a museum exhibit on the Jim Crow South for a total of 30 points. The second section will consist of two long essay questions that will come from this study sheet, and you will choose one to answer, for a total of 70 points. This final examination is worth 25% of your course grade. The final examination is scheduled for **Monday, December 13th, from 9:00-12:00 noon** in our regular classroom. Bring a pen or pencil to the exam; I will provide blue books for you.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Your answers to any of these questions will be evaluated on the following basis:

For Part I: Reading Questions:

You should answer the question thoroughly and completely using evidence from the book. Your answers should demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the question as it relates to the book. Make sure you express yourself using effective language to make your points clearly.

For Part II: The Essay Section:

1. **Organization and thoughtfulness:** Is your essay well organized around a central theme? Does your essay have an effective introduction and conclusion? Are subsections of your essay organized around clear topic sentences? Have you tried to **think** about issues raised by the questions or have you simply tried to regurgitate as much information as possible without much reflections on its significance?
2. **Use of supporting evidence:** Does your essay demonstrate a thorough knowledge of relevant facts presented in **both** lectures and readings? Have you tried to make connections between points addressed at various times in the lectures and the readings that might be relevant to the question you are answering?
3. **Clarity of Expression:** Have you expressed your ideas in clear language? Minor errors of grammar or spelling can be overlooked on an in-class exam, but confused or garbled sentences detract from your ability to communicate effectively what you intend to convey.

Part I: Reading Questions

Two of these will appear on the exam, you will write about one for a total of 30 points.

1. Patricia Sullivan highlighted the direction the NAACP would turn during World War II. “Thurgood Marshall announced the renewal of the legal fight against the white primary at the 1940 conference in Philadelphia in a speech just days before learning of the murder of Elbert Williams. . . . ‘We do not have any power at all compared to what we need.’ The main challenge facing the association, he told the delegates, ‘is to get the Negro the full right to vote in every one of the Southern states.’ In the South, black political power was essential to securing gains on all other fronts—education, public facilities, employment, and justice in the courts. Furthermore, without black votes in the South, ‘we cannot shut up the Connollys, the Bilbos,’ and other southern demagogues who dominated the political process in Washington, dictated national policy on key issues, and jealously guarded against any federal intervention or policy initiative that acknowledged the citizenship rights of blacks.” (p. 245) What progress did the NAACP make during WWII in expanding the right to vote for African Americans? Do you think this was significant progress? Explain your answer.
2. Using Wesley Hogan’s Many Minds, One Heart: SNCC’s Dream for a New America, explain how Nashville became an important training ground for college-age activists. Why do you think many of these young people became leaders in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee?
3. Using Marshall Frady’s Martin Luther King, Jr.: A Life, why did he think King’s work in Albany, Georgia, was “a wilderness time”?

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Part II: Essay Questions

Two of these questions will appear on the final exam, and you will write about one for a total of 70 points.

1. At a cursory glance of the rural South (especially rural Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi), one could conclude that the struggle for black freedom that took place there did not contribute to major civil rights advances such as the Civil Rights Act that grew out of Birmingham or the Voting Rights Act that followed the Selma-to-Montgomery march. Yet, our studies this semester have gone deeper than a cursory glance, and we know that the history of the rural areas of Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi provide an important window into understanding the complexity of the civil rights movement. In I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle Charles Payne asks the following questions: "How was it possible, within a few years, to move large numbers of dependent and, to all appearances, apolitical people—none of them having any semblance of legal rights at the local level, all of them vulnerable to violence—how was it possible to move these people to a position of actively working to change the conditions of their own lives? What did the movement do to them and they to it?" (P. 2) Write an essay answering Payne's questions so that the place of rural Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi in the struggle for civil rights is clear. Make sure that you include in your answer important people, significant events, and key tactics and strategies used to change these places. How was success measured by activists there? How would you define the place of the events that happened in rural Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi in the larger history of the civil rights movement? Explain your answer.

2. David Howard-Pitney tells us in his book, Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, and the Civil Rights Struggle of the 1950s and 1960s: A Brief History with Documents, that "King not only led many specific civil disobedience campaigns, but he also served as the movement's foremost strategist, theorist, interpreter, and symbol maker. His charismatic leadership and inspirational oratory helped create black unity and resolve to keep demonstrating, often amid danger and adversity. Equally crucially, King became the movement's chief interpreter to white Americans. . . King, more than any other single person, led many Americans to view the peaceful black Civil Rights movement as morally right. . . and consonant with America's highest ideals of freedom and equality." (P. 6) Using the following speeches of MLK—"MIA Mass Meeting at Holt Street Baptist Church," (December 5, 1955), "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," (April 16, 1963), "I have a Dream, 1963," (March on Washington August 1963), and "Beyond Vietnam, 1967," (April 4, 1967),—trace how he served as the movement's foremost "strategist, theorist, interpreter, and symbol maker." How do these speeches reveal a more accurate understanding of Dr. King's role in the civil rights movement? Did Dr. King's message change over time? If so, how? If not, what was consistent throughout? What do you think made his speeches so effective? Why do you think Dr. King's image as an American public figure tends to be frozen in front of the Lincoln Memorial delivering his "I Have a Dream" speech in August 1963? Explain your answer.

3. Steven F. Lawson reminds us that the federal government also played an important part in the struggle for racial equality. "It is impossible to understand how Blacks achieved first-class citizenship rights in the South without concentrating on what national leaders in Washington, D.C., did to influence the course of events leading to the extension of racial equality. Powerful presidents, congressional lawmakers, and members of the Supreme Court provided the legal instruments to challenge racial segregation and disfranchisement. Without their crucial support, the struggle against white supremacy in the South still would have taken place but would have lacked the power and authority to defeat state governments intent on keeping Blacks in subservient position." (P. 3) I would also add that in some cases parts of the federal bureaucracy thwarted the aspirations of some civil rights activists, which makes even the actions of the federal government complicated in the history of the civil rights movement. Write an essay that explains the complex role the federal government played in the struggle for racial equality from 1945 until 1968. Who are the particular governmental leaders, federal bureaucrats, court decisions, and pieces of legislation that you think should be recognized in this part of the civil rights story? How did federal governmental neglect in some cases provide fuel for the movement? In what ways did activists use the federal government in their strategy and tactics, and in what ways did members of the federal government allow politics to outweigh morality? Do you think the federal government continues to play a role in the goals created by the civil rights movement? Explain your answer.