

Qualifying Exam
Gender and Sexuality
Summer 2026

The questions below constitute the qualifying exam for the Gender & Sexuality Exam. To complete the exam, you must answer **one question** from each of the **three sections below** in an essay format. Each answer should be a self-contained essay approximately 8–10 pages long (i.e., 2,000–2,500 words). Although you must cite to referenced work in each essay, one comprehensive bibliography for all three questions will be sufficient. You may consult materials from the reading list you've been provided, as well as any other scholarly sources you've read during the exam period.

Section I:

- A. How do indigenous and decolonial frameworks and studies challenge Western epistemologies around gender, sexuality, and queerness? How do these frameworks subvert, reveal, and indict the colonial legacy embedded within hegemonic gender and sexuality studies? Additionally, consider how the intersections of race, nation, sexuality, and gender fluidity complicate existing sociological models of identity.
- B. Drawing upon the provided reading list, critically analyze the sociological and theoretical frameworks that elucidate gendered differences and similarities around homosexuality, between gay men and lesbian women. In your essay, consider how additional intersecting axes of identity—such as race, class, and migration status—shape these divergences or overlapping phenomena within broader systems of power. Illustrate your arguments with examples from empirical studies and theoretical debates on sexuality and gender hierarchies, resistance, and inequalities, emphasizing how these frameworks contribute to understanding the diversity and complexity of gendered differences between homosexual men and women in contemporary society.

Section II:

- A. While many sociologists are employing queer theory, some still misunderstand or misapply it. In the following essay, please answer the following:
 - 1. Based on the readings from the list, what are four main components of queer theory as a theoretical lens? In your perspective, how does that differ from LGBT studies or dominant gender and sexuality studies?
 - 2. Pick **three readings** from the list that employ queer theory and explain, their major arguments, how they use queer theory differently and/or similarly?
 - 3. Finally, briefly reflect on how using queer theory in sociology reshapes our sociological imagination.

- B. Most studies on gender & sexuality in the US do not use transnational perspectives. In this essay, please answer the following:
1. What does a transnational analysis of gender and sexuality mean?
 2. Please pick **two texts** from the reading list that use transnational perspectives on sexuality and illustrate their major contributions and shortcomings.
 3. Then, pick **two other readings** that do not employ a transnational perspective and highlight their contributions and shortcomings. Following that, imagine if they had used transnational perspectives, how would their contributions look: the same or differently and if so, how?

Section III:

- A. How do organizations contribute to the production and transformation of social inequality?
1. Discuss major organizational and institutional theories relevant to inequality.
 2. Evaluate empirical research on organizational mechanisms that reproduce or reduce inequality, using examples from employment, education, culture, science, or other institutional settings. **Draw on at least 3-4 empirical studies.**
- B. How does intersectionality provide a useful framework for understanding inequality?
1. Explain the theoretical foundations of intersectionality and compare them with other approaches to inequality.
 2. Evaluate empirical research on how intersecting systems of race, gender, class, sexuality, or disability operate within institutions such as workplaces, schools, healthcare, or the criminal justice system. **Draw on at least 3-4 empirical studies.**