



C.S. 204: SPRING 2001  
STUDY QUESTIONS FOR FINAL EXAM  
FERGUSON: SECTIONS 1 & 14



**INSTRUCTIONS:** The final exam for C.S. 204 will be held on Wednesday, June 6, 2001, in Room 500 Nicely. On the final exam you will be asked to answer *two* of the following questions. Although there may be some choice, you cannot know beforehand which questions will be selected. You may also be required to answer an "objective" question at the beginning of the exam.

1. Describe three major objections that have been, or might be, raised against Darwin's theory of evolution and give a detailed assessment of each of them (i.e. consider whether they refute the theory, merely require a modification in it, or whether they are entirely unconvincing). Assuming, for the sake of argument at least, that evolution theory is correct, is there any reason why we should be troubled by this fact? Does the theory provide the basis for an interesting critique of any of the other texts we have encountered in this course?
2. Freud has probably had more influence over the arts (literature, painting, film, etc.) than he has had within science. Choose two or three of the other texts we have examined in this course, and describe in detail how Freud's psychoanalytic theory is presupposed by, embodied in, or illustrated by, these texts. How are we to account for the extent of his influence? (Is it, for example, because his theories are true, or is there some other explanation?) Could it be argued that the embodiment of Freud's theories in these texts indirectly provides evidence for his theories? Does the fact that these texts presuppose his theories detract from to their literary merits?
3. We have encountered three different views of science in C.S. 204: scientific realism, Popper's falsificationist theory, and relativist views of science. Explain each of these views clearly, but concisely, and give a detailed evaluation of each of them. Which of them, in your view, provides the more accurate account of science? (In your evaluation of these theories it would be appropriate to consider how well they agree with some of the episodes in science, especially evolution theory and Big Bang cosmology, that we have examined in this course.)
4. Everyone will agree that life presents us with a great variety of problems; we must decide what occupation to choose, what goals to pursue, who our friends will be, and so on and so forth. Some of the authors we have encountered in this course, however, appear to believe that over and above all of these "practical" problems there is what might be described as a more "philosophical" problem concerning the very meaning and purpose of life. Explain as clearly as you can what this problem is supposed to be and why it is thought to arise. Do you agree that there is any such problem and, if so, is there any possibility of overcoming it? Support your view by detailed arguments.
5. What does Simone de Beauvoir mean when she describes women as the second sex? Illustrate what she means by reference to episodes (events, characters, etc.) in at least two of the other works we have examined in this course. What does she think must happen if the unequal treatment and status of women is to be fully overcome? Do you agree? Consider in some detail whether it could plausibly be argued that liberal feminism is a Western phenomenon which may come into conflict with the right of non-Western peoples to engage in their own distinctive cultural practices and way of life.
6. What is orientalism? (You may need to distinguish several different senses of the term 'orientalism' here.) Describe as accurately as you can the main theses concerning orientalism defended by Edward Said. Using our two "Arab" novels as sources of data and information about the (Middle Eastern) orient, assess the extent to which Said's theses are correct.
7. In addition to the interpretation of *Midaq Alley* presented in our Monday lecture, there are two other interpretations of the novel that might be offered. It might be read simply as a "slice of life" novel; that is, Mahfouz presents a vivid picture of life in a Cairo slum without making, either explicitly or implicitly, any value judgments about the characters or about Egyptian society. On the other hand, some have argued that the novel cannot but be interpreted as a savage indictment of virtually all aspects of Egyptian society. Which of these interpretations seems to you more plausible? Support your view by detailed references to the text.
8. At the beginning of *Season of Migration to the North* the narrator happily returns to his village in the Sudan after a seven-year absence studying in Britain. By the end of the novel we find him floundering in the middle of the Nile, apparently contemplating suicide. Describe the events that occur in the intervening period in such a way as to explain how this transformation comes about. What is the significance of the narrator's experience for the issue of colonialism and the challenges it poses for peoples who have been colonized? What in your view is the best advice that could be given to the narrator to help him overcome his problem?