Potential test questions from Sarah

1. List and define four mind and body problems according to Descartes.
2. How does Searle agree or disagree with materialist on the definition of consciousness? How does Searle agree or disagree with dualists?
3. What did the age of commerce bring to society that was absent from all other ages? Why does Smith believe this difference is so significant? Who would disagree?
4. According to Graeber, how do we misunderstand revolution? How does this misunderstanding relate to our view of cultures and societies?
5. Anthropology does not have an abstract definition. How would you describe or define anthropology?

From Jen A. and Jeff:

Consider Peters-Golden's "Culture Sketches" and Herman's presentation of Adam Smith's ideas. On one hand, you have a functioning economy and culture predicated upon giving. Smith, however, predicates his economy on "self-interest." Is one right or wrong? Does "human nature" exist, or is it socially constructed?
Elaborate on Desia's and Herman's ideas on liberty. In what ways are humans beings really free (if at all)?
How would Geertz critique Malinowski? Consider the idea of reflexivity.
Compare Searle and Robertson. Why are they both opposed to Cartesian dualism?
Creative destruction: what are its pros and cons? What do you think Marx thought of this?

From Christina Ju and Claudia Testa

1. What would be Marx's response to Robertson’s idea of self-interest?
2. How is Wolf a critique of Geertz, and would Robertson more or less agree with Wolf's critique?
3. Can gift giving be considered an economic system, or is it more of a social tradition?
4. How would Marx, Smith, and Robertson respond to self-interest in terms of capitalism?
5. After reading Searle, we discussed Descartes and his four characteristics of the mind: that it is known directly, it is free, indivisible, and indestructible. Would you agree with all of these characteristics? Explain why you would or would not for each.
6. How is ambition seen in a capitalist society in comparison to how a culture like the Ju/'hoansi would see it?
7. What is the difference between wants and needs? In your opinion where is the line drawn to separate the two? Discuss the complexities.

From Meghan Ryan

1. The mind-body problem is consistently seen throughout all the readings of this course. In the case of capitalism, would society say that it is driven by the physical need or a conscious want in the mind?
2. Malinowski says, "Ethnology has introduced law and order into what seemed chaotic and freakish." Do you agree? Why?
3. Is all our knowledge socially embedded or is it possible to make pre-theoretical assumptions?
4. Summarizing all the writers accounts, what would be a good definition of anthropology?
5. If capitalism is based on inequality and is "the new form of slavery", then why does it exist?
6. In Desai, he talks about a philosopher’s task as changing a person's point of view. In class, we discussed that anthropology believes that it is better to observe than change. Is political theory or political action better?
From Eddie and Matt

1. The fall of the Berlin wall has been characterized by Fukayama as 'the end of history.' His argument is capitalism has won and will continue infinitely on as the economic paradigm to be implemented in the global economy. The history of other economic models represents an opposing viewpoint which forecasts that the shelf life of capitalism should be about 1,000 years. If one is to assume that history repeats itself, what is going to be the next economic model to replace capitalism now that communism has fallen? Could capitalism, the poster child for change as a virtue in the economy, break the cycle of certain death and remain the dominant force in the political economy?

2. The basic drive of any economy is ideas. Looking at the cultures studied so far thus far this semester what are the essential elements of the Trobriand exchange, the Dobi exchange, The Gift and finally capitalism?

3. Compare and contrast Geertz and Wolf's ideas of an anthropological study of society.

From Dave

1. Define “self interest.”
2. Discuss Adam Smith’s view of “self interest.”
3. Can people intentionally do something that is against their self interest? Why or why not?
4. What is “theory?”
5. Summarize Moore’s discussion of the relationship between theory and ethnography.
6. Review Desai’s history of communism.
7. Summarize Desai’s critique of how various communist states have appropriated the ideas of Marx.
8. How is our society based on “the gift?”
9. Contrast Moche understandings of “reproduction” to the way reproduction is typically understood in the United States.
10. Discuss Graeber’s critique of US “democracy.”
11. Discuss the virtues and vices of Graeber’s three point plan to improve the world (see pg. 78).
12. Imagine a world “in which everyone really did have the power to decide for themselves, individually and collectively, what sort of communities they wished to belong to and what sort of identities they wanted to take on.” Is such a world anthropologically possible? Why or why not?
13. Why is time essential to gift giving? Why is “the gift” crucial to society?
14. How is “growth” central to our society? How is growth central to our understanding of our society? Can growth be malignant?
15. Use any five of the authors we have read so far to critique the idea of having a course entitled “Minds and Bodies.”
16. What are the virtues and vices of academic “disciplines?” What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a “major?”
17. Can we have an anarchist classroom?
18. Why would I insist on you constructing your own exam?
19. Why do I retain the right to grade your exam?
20. How will you judge what you have learned in this course?
21. How do you suppose I will judge what you have learned in this course? How will I judge my performance in this course?
22. Use five of the authors we have read to discuss the point of a university education.
23. Why does education cost money? Should education cost money?
24. Discuss the transition in the Western understanding of human nature from “passions” to “interests.” What has been gained and lost in this transition?