

Preliminary Examination

American Intellectual and Cultural History  
9 September 1989

I

(Three hours)

There have been four great intellectual and cultural movements in Western civilization since 1500. Each has involved a great upheaval in consciousness, perception, value systems, and ideology which has affected the way we think of ourselves and our world. These cultural revolutions are as follows:

1. The Reformation of the sixteenth century.
2. The eighteenth-century Enlightenment.
3. Romanticism, which prevailed in the early nineteenth century.
4. Modernism in the twentieth-century.

Choose any THREE (3) of the above, and write (one hour on each) an essay in which you critically discuss the major ways in which each of the movements chosen found expression in American thought and culture. Cite the historiographical literature where possible to illustrate your points.

II

(One hour)

Write an essay on the nature of intellectual history as a speciality within the discipline of history in which you deal with the question, do ideas determine material conditions or do material conditions determine ideas? If this formulation of the question is not adequate, provide a substitute. Be as concrete as possible by citing the historiographical literature to show how historians have dealt with the issues under discussion.

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Write on FOUR (4) questions, choosing one from each part. Address yourself to the question asked. Indicate your familiarity with the historical literature, but demonstrate what you know and think about the question. Be specific; support your generalizations.

I

Describe intellectual history, comparing and contrasting it with the history of ideas and with other types of history (e.g., the history of philosophy, of religion, of literature, of political thought, etc.). What is cultural history; how does it relate to intellectual history? How do intellectual and cultural history relate to social history or "the new social history"? Cite authors and books to illustrate your points.

II

2. Discuss the main constitutional principles Americans subscribed to in the late eighteenth century and show how they did or did not find expression in the federal Constitution.
3. "The men who wrote the federal Constitution in 1787 accepted Whig history, Lockean psychology, and Newtonian cosmology, but by the early twentieth century Americans accepted none of these earlier modes of thought and were forced, in effect, to rewrite the Constitution from other sources." Critically discuss.

III

4. While conceding that there may have been less doctrinal rigor over time, historians have divided over the question of whether there was growing religious vitality rather than declension in the eighteenth century. What position do you take on this issue, and why?
5. How many "Great Awakenings" have there been throughout the course of American history? When did each begin and end (be as precise as possible)? What, if anything, have they all had in common? What have been the most striking differences?

IV

6. What evidence bears out the assertion by Robert V. Bruce in The Launching of Modern American Science, 1846-1876 (1987) that "all the key elements of the modern scientific establishment had made at least an initial appearance by the end of the 1870s?"
7. To what extent, if any, did the university replace the church as the dominant force in American intellectual and cultural life in the twentieth century?

