

Preliminary Examination  
Early Modern Europe, 1648-1815

Sept. 10/99

Instructions:

Take a deep breath, try to relax. Now, answer one question for each of the three following sections. Remember to refer to relevant historians and historiography.

Section I: 1648-1789

1. In his Contentious French, the social historian Charles Tilly wrote of Bourbon Absolutism, "As they fashioned an organization for making war, the king's servants inadvertently created a centralized state. First the framework of an army, then a government built around that framework -- and in its shape." Write a critique of this analysis for France, 1648 to 1789, making reference to current questions concerning the very existence of "Absolutism."

2. It was once accepted practically as a given that the French nobility experienced an "aristocratic resurgence" during the eighteenth century, but this argument has lately been under attack by the likes of William Beik. Consider the fluctuations in the power of the French nobility, 1648-1789.

Section II: 1750-1815

1. Recent historiography has focused on the French Revolution as a "cultural" phenomenon. With reference to relevant historiography, assess the "cultural" nature of the Revolution and the usefulness of this approach to understanding it. What was the relationship between politics and culture from 1789 to 1815 and was this a new phenomenon?

2. How has the recent emphasis on practices and institutions, rather than ideas alone, changed our understanding of the European Enlightenment? What was the relationship between ideas and practices in the Enlightenment? To what extent did the methods of the Enlightenment affect the reception of its ideas?

Section III: 1648-1815

1. How has the notion of "popular culture" been used in writing the history of early modern Europe? What are the strengths and the weaknesses of this approach? How did relations between the people and the elite change in this period and what significant changes did "popular culture" undergo in this period, in your opinion?
2. "Historians, anthropologists, and sociologists have all pointed out that the dichotomy male/female is linked in many societies, at least in theory, to the dichotomy public/private (or domestic) - that is the male realm is defined as public, and the female realm as private." Discuss the use of the public/private split in the historiography of European women and gender from 1648 to 1815 with reference to specific historians and works of history. How useful is this model for understanding gender and women's history?

Section II: 1750-1815

1. Recent historiography has focused on the French Revolution as a "cultural" phenomenon. With reference to relevant historiography, assess the "cultural" nature of the Revolution and the usefulness of this approach to understanding it. What was the relationship between politics and culture from 1789 to 1815 and was this a new phenomenon?
2. How has the recent emphasis on practices and institutions, rather than ideas alone, changed our understanding of the European Enlightenment? What was the relationship between ideas and practices in the Enlightenment? To what extent did the methods of the Enlightenment derive the reputation of its ideas?

