

Department of History  
Spring 2008

Modern European Preliminary Examination

The total time available for this examination is five hours. Choose one question from each of the three sections. Be sure to discuss specific scholars and scholarly works where appropriate. A passing answer should include a discussion of the relevant historiography.

I. Answer one of the following:

A: Discuss the idea of political revolution as developed by intellectuals in the period 1750-1850. While this will be primarily an intellectual history, think of the ramifications for political culture as well.

B: How would you conceptualize a history of the idea of "progress" for an upper-division undergraduate course covering the nineteenth century?

II. Answer one of the following:

A: How has the biopolitical imagination in the twentieth century facilitated and restricted the autonomy of the self? What are the advantages and limits of a Foucauldian analysis of the individual body? Be sure to provide examples drawn from historical encounters or historiographical texts.

B: How would you conceptualize the history of the private sphere over the course of the nineteenth century?

III. Answer one of the following:

A. To what extent and how is it useful to locate a totalitarian impulse in European politics in the 1920s and 1930s? Be sure to discuss both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, although you may discuss other countries as well.

B. Discuss European nationalism in the years since 1945 with some reference to eastern Europe and to the years both before and since 1989.

Preliminary Examination  
Modern European History  
February, 2008

**Directions:** Answer three of the questions below. Be sure that your essay has a clear line of argument, engages with both the relevant history and historiography, and discusses specific scholars and scholarly works.

1. Outline the historiography of the French Revolution during the past thirty years. What subjects, sources, methodologies, and lines of analysis have the relevant writings and their authors entailed? Which historical works do you think have been the most (and the least) successful and why? Are there new directions that the study of the Revolution in France should pursue in the future in your view?
2. You are charged with the educational mission of teaching an upper-level undergraduate lecture course on the history of European Marxism, broadly conceived, from the publication of The Communist Manifesto in 1848 to the dissolution of the Soviet Union. What does your course syllabus look like, and what will you say to students in your opening lecture? Be sure to include the story of thinkers, workers, organizations, and governments in your coverage.
3. At a time when national identity is waning in Europe, why is there so much interest in the history of European nationalism today? Discuss the major theories, past and present, of European nationalism and the main aspects of nationalism, including its cultural dimensions, as they are presented in this scholarly literature. Range as widely as possible chronologically and geographically.
4. Why is World War One regarded as the fundamental dividing point between “the long nineteenth century” and “the short twentieth century”? What did (and did not) change in European society, politics, and culture as a consequence of the years 1914-1918? Include in your answer both the pertinent historiography of the subject and your own answers to the question. Also be sure to include a review of recent specific works on the Great War as an event in European cultural history.
5. Write an essay discussing the current state of scholarship on European fascism. In your estimation, what are the most important and exciting lines of research and analysis of the subject in recent years. Include at least three nations in your discussion as well as scholarly writing by North American and European historians.
6. The concept of totalitarianism was central to Cold War era scholarship about Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia, whether written by historians, political scientists, or political philosophers. Review chronologically and evaluate analytically this body of writing from Hannah Arendt to the present. How did scholars of totalitarianism (and how do you) analyze comparatively the main totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century? Is the totalitarian idea still useful and valid? If so, why, and if not, what successor categories of analysis do you prefer or propose to study the worlds of Hitler and Stalin?

