

Preliminary Examination
History of Medicine and Science
Examiners: Professors Micale and Reagan
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. Your essays should be comparative in their geographical scope.

1) Your reading list indicates a strong interest in the history of diseases. But what exactly does it mean to write “the history of a disease?” From your bibliography, select one book that studies historically five different diseases--AIDS, cancer, cholera, hysteria, leprosy, sickle cell anemia, smallpox, syphilis, tuberculosis, typhoid fever, etc.—and then discuss these five books comparatively. Be sure to make your choice of works carefully with attention to contrasts among them. What subjects, sources, methodologies, lines of analysis, and types of understanding do these five books entail? Which do you think are most (and least) successful and why? Are there new directions that disease historiography should pursue in the future?

2) Catherine Kudlick has called disability analysis equally fundamental to historical analysis as class, gender, and race. If historians were to apply the insights from disability studies to the history of medicine, how might it change? Would we have to rewrite the standard histories of the professions, hospitals, therapeutics, theories, and public health?

3) Historians of Germany have investigated the history of the relation between Nazism and medicine (and public health) whereas historians of the United States have analyzed racism and medicine. In your reading, what relation do you see between these fields and the histories of Germany and the U.S.? Are they comparable, or are we asking you to compare apples and oranges? Please trace how these histories do or do not relate in terms of the historical processes, explanations, and questions posed by scholars. Are there insights or questions from the American literature that could illuminate German medical (and political and cultural) history, and vice versa? Please explain.

4) Review, both chronologically and conceptually, the historical scholarship on laboratories, including but not limiting your essay to the literature on German science and medicine. In your judgment what is important and exciting about these books and articles, and how have they contributed to our historical understanding? What are the strengths (and limitations) of historical laboratory scholarship? Finally, in what ways might you draw on this evolving body of writing in your own dissertation?

5) Undergraduate instruction in the history of the sciences typically emphasizes several prominent episodes from ancient Greek science to the present. At least three of these episodes appear prominently on your reading list: the Scientific Revolution,

Darwin and evolutionary theory, and the history of eugenics. Choose one of these subjects, and write an essay reviewing the basic history and historiography of the subject. How would you teach this subject to college students with both science and non-science backgrounds?

6) Michel Foucault brought the attention of scholars to the importance of the "gaze" to medicine and power. How does this concept relate to the visual cultures of medicine and to historians' growing interest in the analysis of visual media? What are some of the major arguments about medical visual culture and how it has changed over time? How does analysis of visual culture change our understanding of medicine, health, and science?

