

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?

## Early Modern Europe Preliminary Exam – Spring 99

In each section, pick one of the two questions. (You will thus write a total of three essays)

### Reformation and Early Modern

1. What concepts and interpretive frameworks have historians used to understand "religion" in this age of unprecedented religious transformation and creativity? What are their strengths and weaknesses? Consider scholarship on the German Reformation and on at least one other area.

2. Discuss the state of research on the relationship between the Reformations of the sixteenth century and the rise of the state. Consider both urban and rural studies; consider the Lutheran Reformation and at least one other case (i.e. Reformed, Anabaptist, Anglican, etc.).

### 17th and 18th centuries:

1. "It's the fault of Voltaire; it's the fault of Rousseau" To what extent can the outbreak and the progression of the French Revolution be attributed to ideas and to what extent are other factors important? Discuss in the context of relevant historiographical debates.

2. Outline attempts by European states in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to use their economies to foster centralization and state-building. In your opinion, did the growth of capitalism and commercial society serve the state or was it fundamentally destabilizing of political order? Discuss in the context of relevant historiographical debates.

### Combined Questions (covering the entire period of this field):

1. Discuss the rise of scholarship on "popular culture". How useful do you find this term for analyzing and understanding early modern European society and culture and why? What are the limitations of this concept, if any? Discuss in the context of relevant historiographical debates.

2. Discuss the current state of historical scholarship on the family and gender and their relationship in early modern Europe. How did family help reinforce prevailing gender ideologies or, by contrast, how did it undercut dominant ideas about masculinity and femininity or appropriate male and female behavior?

Preliminary Examination:  
Early Modern Europe  
(Bernard/Lynn)

CHOOSE THREE OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. Some historians claim that the absolutism of Louis XIV was essentially "feudal," that is based upon an accommodation with the landed nobility; in contrast, the traditional view describes absolutism as "modern," because the central state accumulated power to the detriment of aristocratic and provincial autonomy. Discuss this controversy. Do you feel that absolutism is best considered to be feudal or modern?
2. Did France and Prussia experience an "aristocratic resurgence" during the eighteenth century? If so, how did the phenomenon differ in the two states both in terms of character and importance?
3. Which interpretation of developments 1789-99 best describes the work of the French Revolution, one that stresses a radical break with the past or one that stresses continuity with the *ancien régime*?
4. In 1740/41 the Austrian state was militarily defeated, the central authority barely functioned, rebellion, if it had not broken out, as it actually did in Bohemia, was seething just below the surface. Yet the Habsburg Monarchy did not merely survive this crisis, but emerged from it considerably strengthened. Why?
5. Between them, the Great Elector and Frederick William I are generally credited by historians as having fashioned the infrastructure which made it possible for an impoverished, under populated and all but resource-less Prussia to emerge as a world power under Frederick the Great. Yet, most scholars would agree that both of the former rulers were men whose talents were, at best, mediocre. What was it that they did which turned out to be so successful?
6. Consider the peasant question in the eighteenth century. With the exception of a few outlying areas, most notably the United Provinces, society was still overwhelmingly organized around agricultural production. Upward of eighty per cent of the population still derived its livelihood directly from the soil, and most of those who did so were peasants. Yet, again with a few exceptions, land ownership was concentrated in a relatively very few hands and the agricultural laborer got essentially very little for his labor. Was this condition an obstacle to national and economic growth? Was it perceived as such? If it was, what was done about it under the *ancien régime* in various European societies?

PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION  
EARLY MODERN EUROPE

Fall 1995

Bernard & I.vnn

Answer 3 Questions.

1. To what extent did the foreign policy of Louis XIV aim at a French hegemony in Europe? Were his wars the desired results of conscious policy or the unwanted consequences of diplomatic miscalculations?
2. What were the privileges that the European aristocracy enjoyed vis à vis the state in the eighteenth century, 1715-1789? Contrast the situation of France with that of Prussia. To what extent did these privileges bring about the Revolution in France? And if they did precipitate revolution in France, why did they not do so in Prussia?
3. Was dictatorship in France inevitable or unavoidable in 1793-94 and 1799-1814? Compare the two sets of circumstances.
4. Describe and analyze the Eastern Policy of the Habsburg Monarchy 1683-1739. What factors were mainly responsible for its lamentable culmination?
5. The Theresian period is seen, variously, as a prelude to Josephinism; as a late flowering of the Baroque Monarchy; and as the cradle of Austro-Catholicism. What do you think it was? All, none, or some of the above?
6. Discuss the beginning's of Brandenburg -- Prussian state formation under the Great Elector, Fredrick I and Fredrick William I. What sort of mechanism was it that Fredrick II inherited?

Attach a working bibliography of 8-10 titles to each question you choose.

EARLY MODERN EUROPE PRELIMINARY EXAM

Professors Bernard and Lynn

April 1995

Choose 3 questions. Please be sure to discuss the literature on each question as well as the substance of the matter.

1. Louis XIV pursued not only political and military preeminence in Europe, but cultural leadership as well. Discuss the way in which his cultural policies fit into his absolutist assumptions and goals.
2. Interpret the French Revolution either as a series of successive revolts, each involving different participants and purposes, or as a "collection" of distinct but concurrent revolutions in which different classes and/or interest groups pursued their own goals. To what extent does either picture explain the arrest of the king, the end of the Terror, and the coup which finally put Napoleon in power?
3. To what extent did Napoleon fit the pattern of the ideal eighteenth-century enlightened despot?
4. Account for the circumstance that Brandenburg/Prussia, a relatively undersized, under populated and impoverished territorial entity, was able to mount a successful raid upon the Habsburg empire in 1740, and to withstand the retaliatory assault of what may well have been the most powerful coalition of the century in the next war.
5. Assess the tripartite relationship of Maria Theresia, Joseph II and Kaunitz in the period 1763-1780. Were there discernible alliances within the troika? Did these shift over time? With respect to types of issues? Both? Neither? Are there areas in which a plausible argument can be made that one of the three had by far the clearest vision? What were the institutional supports of the respective protagonists?
6. The Austrian historical school has maintained throughout this century that the region of Leopold I represents the breakthrough point of the Austrian Habsburgs to great power status. It is easy to make this argument from the purview of diplomacy and the battlefield. Yet, internally, Leopold's achievements appear to have been, at first glance, much more modest. It could even be said that he failed to construct and maintain an infrastructure equal to sustaining his ambitious and far-reaching policies. How might this apparent contradiction be resolved?

Early Modern Europe

Preliminary Examination

Choose 4 of the following. Give a working bibliography for each of your answers.

1. To what extent can the government of Louis XIV be described, in the words of Saint-Simon, as "The reign of the vile bourgeoisie"? What is the importance of the class origins of Louis's bureaucrats?
2. The period 1688-1815 is sometimes called the Second Hundred Years' War between England (Great Britain) and France. How apt is this description? Who won and why? What benefits went to the victor?
3. Did Napoleon betray or confirm the accomplishments of the French Revolution?
4. Were the reforms of Joseph II merely the logical continuation of those of Maria Theresia, or did they differ from them, either in their aims or in the method in which they were instituted?
5. Compare the internal administrations of the Great Elector and of Frederick The Great. Which did more for Prussia?
6. What factors can be used to explain the astonishing prosperity of the United Provinces in the 17th century?

EARLY MODERN EUROPE  
SPRING 1993

Answer four (4) of the following. Append a working bibliography to each answer.

1. Compare the accomplishments of Louis XIV in government and administration with those of the Great Elector.
2. The Enlightenment might or might not have prepared the way for a quarter century of political and social revolution in Europe. Quite apart from that question, however, it undoubtedly transformed Western society in a number of irreversible and more fundamental ways. What were these, and what were the mechanisms by which these transformations were institutionalized?
3. Political absolutism, not perfected in the West outside of a very limited context until the end of the 17th century, had amply demonstrated its lack of staying power by the end of the 18th. What were the reasons for this? In Asia, after all, it could and did last for centuries, if not millenia.
4. Ever since Georges Lefebvre, and perhaps since Jean Jaures, historians of the French Revolution have conceived of it not as a single revolution, but as a series of revolutions, each with its own base of support and goals. Discuss this view of the Revolution, 1789-94.
5. Consider the work of Montesquieu and/or Rousseau as shaping an intellectual climate that made revolution in the late eighteenth century either possible or likely.
6. The dispute between Cobban and the French Marxists has, in essence, defined the historiography of the French Revolution in our times. Provide a detailed account of this argument and relate the positions of the leading present-day practitioners of French revolutionary history to it.
7. "In the last analysis it was Bonaparte who perceived and expanded upon the fundamental impulses of '89; all the others were impostors, madmen, or counter-revolutionaries." Comment.

September 1992

## Written Preliminary Examination in the History of Early Modern Europe, 1648-1815

Answer one question from each of the three sections. While each essay should make reference to articles and books germane to the question under consideration, in at least one of your answers you must include a more extended discussion of the relevant historiography.

### Section I

1. Louis XIV engaged in a series of wars from 1667-1714. André Corvisier characterizes the strategy of the Sun King in his later wars as a "défensive agressive." To what extent is this a fair portrayal, or is the contemporary British view that Louis aimed at European hegemony closer to the mark?
2. Analyze the notion of the "well-ordered police state" both historically and historiographically. What were the realities to which it corresponds; which were the socio-cultural prejudices that spawned it?

### Section II

3. To what extent are the works of Locke and Montesquieu best regarded as defenses of the status quo and to what extent can they be seen as calling for change? Can they be said to have laid a foundation for reform and revolution in the eighteenth century?
4. Miss Behrens contrasts the French and Prussian situations in order to throw light on the relationship of enlightenment and policy in the 18th century. Analyze her argument. To what extent would it have been aided by including Austria?

### Section III

5. Marxists have long classified the French Revolution, 1789-99, as a "bourgeois" revolution. Discuss the **reality** and the **historiography** of this viewpoint.
6. It has been argued that of all the great revolutions of the early modern period, the most important was the demographic revolution. Elaborate.

Early Modern History

Choose 3 questions. Provide a working bibliography for each.

1. Much has been written proposing and challenging various definitions of Absolutism. Using the French case as the basis for your argument, define Absolutism and demonstrate its effects or deny its reality. Who best might qualify as an Absolutist, Louis XIV or Napoleon?
2. Did France and Prussia experience an "aristocratic resurgence" during the eighteenth century? If so, how did the phenomenon differ in the two states?
3. Which view of events 1789-99 best explains the course of the French Revolution, one that stresses a radical break with the past or one that stresses continuity with the ancien régime?
4. Was absolutism in control/Eastern Europe similar in origin and development to its Western counterparts, or was it more closely related to oriental despotism?
5. Comment on the phenomenon of the "Crisis of the aristocracy" in Europe. What evidence is cited in its behalf, how convincing is it?
6. Describe the various transformations in Peasant society in the Early Modern Period. Concentrate on France and on the Habsburg Monarchy.

OCT 24 1990

Answer one question in each of the three sections. While each answer should make reference to articles and books germane to the question under consideration, in at least one of your answers you must include a major discussion of the relevant historiography.

## Section I:

How effectively did Louis XIV and his controllers general of finance meet the state's demand for revenues, 1661-1715? Did Colbert transform an older system, make significant improvements in it, or simply run it somewhat more effectively than it had been run before his administration? Did the need to finance the wars of Louis XIV drive the system towards modernization or hold it back?

Austria in the 18th century was a notoriously poorer land than France. Nor were the Habsburg rulers noted for their parsimony. Yet it was the French crown that was bankrupted, not the Austrian. Explain the reasons behind this apparent paradox, with citations from the literature.

## Section II:

Discuss the emphasis on utility as a justification for privilege and power during the Enlightenment. Did this constitute an essential aspect of the concept of Enlightened despotism? How did it influence political ideas during the French Revolution?

There are those who maintain that Frederick the Great's genius was exclusively military; yet he engineered some notorious fiascos on the battlefield. Others regard him as essentially an artist, forced by fate and circumstance to turn his attention to mundane matters; yet that portion of his artistic output which is subject to judgment is decidedly mediocre. He has been called a brilliant administrator; yet examples of his small-mindedness, insistence on petty details and ignorance of the greater principles abound. Was there anything that justified his sobriquet?

## Section III:

Define the sans-culottes, both as they saw themselves and as historians see them today. Why did they at first support the extreme revolution so faithfully and then turn against Robespierre and his cronies in the summer of 1794? After being so important 1789-94, why did they not exercise power after Thermidor?

It is generally asserted that Eastern Europe in the Early Modern Period underwent a retrograde development in social history: whereas the West European peasantry on the whole emancipated itself during this period and emerged as a relatively secure class of small-holders; Eastern Europe underwent the so-called second serfdom. Analyze the course of this process in Prussia, Bohemia and Hungary.

Preliminary Examination in  
Early Modern European History, 1648-1815

Instructions: Answer one question each from sections I, II, and III. While each answer should make reference to articles and books germane to the question under consideration, in at least one of your answers you must include a major discussion of the relevant historiography.

Section I:

1. Analyze in detail the development of statecraft in Brandenburg-Prussia under a) the Great Elector, b) Frederick I, c) Frederic William I, and d) Frederick II. What were the essential contributions of each reign? Was there an underlying continuum tying the four reigns together? If so, what was it?

2. What were the principal challenges to royal authority in France 1648-1715? How did Louis XIV respond to them? Was he successful? If so, were the means he used to maintain his personal authority such that they eventually undermined his successors?

Section II:

1. Compare the domestic as well as the international situations facing the heads of the House of Austria at the accession of **either** a) Leopold I and Maria Theresa **or** b) Charles VI and Joseph II. What solutions to the principal problems facing the state were attempted? What mechanisms to implement these were created? In either case, what were the decisions made in the first reign which fatally influenced the second?

2. Did the eighteenth-century witness an "aristocratic resurgence?" Examine the French case and compare it to at least one other Continental European state.

Section III:

1. Discuss the role played by intellectual factors, both formal political philosophy and popular mentalities, in the onset and course of the French Revolution 1787-1794.

2. Describe the Napoleonic Settlement, those policies and programs by which Napoleon won support and pacified opposition in France. To what degree were these moves original to Napoleon, and to what degree did he inherit them

from the Directory? Did Napoleon institutionalize or betray the Revolution?

Preliminary Examination in  
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Section I:

1. Compare in detail the development of statecraft in early modern France as under the Great Elector, 1) Frederick William I, and 2) Frederick II. What were the principal contributions of each reign? Was there an underlying continuity tying the two reigns together? If so, what was it?

2. What were the principal challenges to royal authority in France 1648-1715? How did Louis XIV respond to them? Was he successful? If so, were the results he sought attained his personal authority such that they eventually underpinned his successors?

Section II:


1. Compare the domestic as well as the international situations facing the heads of the House of Austria at the accession of either a) Leopold I and Maria Theresa or b) Charles VI and Joseph II. What solutions to the principal problems facing the state were attempted? What arrangements to implement these were created? In either case, what were the decisions made in the first reign which fatally influenced the second?

2. Did the eighteenth-century witness an "aristocratic renaissance"? Examine the French case and compare it to at least one other Continental European state.

Section III:

1. Describe the role played by intellectual culture, both verbal, political, philosophy, and popular culture, in the onset and course of the French Revolution, 1789-1804.

2. Describe the nationalist developments, their policies and objectives by which Napoleon set himself to unify France, 1804-1815. How did these developments differ from original nationalist goals and what degree of success did they achieve?

② Preliminary Exam for 

Early Modern Europe

Professors Sutcliffe and Crowston

Answer THREE of the following SIX questions:

What do studies of urbanization contribute to our understanding of early modern European history?

To what extent did relations between women and men change over the early modern period? How has the concept of gender contributed to our understanding of these changes?

How different, and why, were the Dutch, the Spanish and the Portuguese in their approach to the Americas?

What was the pattern of the flow of ideas in the early modern Atlantic world? To what extent can we speak of a Spanish, Portuguese, and a New World Enlightenment?

What do we learn from the history of consumption? How does the concept of a "consumer revolution" reinforce or undermine pre-existing ideas about the "Industrial Revolution"?

Many historians have focused on the 18th century as the "birth of modernity". Based on your reading, did Europe become "modern" in this period and what elements of economic, social, cultural, and/or economic change constituted modernity?

①

## Early Modern Prelim Questions

Chose three of the following.

1. Charles Tilly wrote: "War made the state and the state made war." To what degree is this cryptic analysis of state formation appropriate to the France of Louis XIV? Was Louis's absolutism based on coercion?
2. Did France and Prussia experience an "aristocratic resurgence" during the eighteenth century? If so, how did the phenomenon differ in the two states?
3. Which view of events and institutions, 1789-1815, best explains the Revolutionary and Napoleonic period, one that stresses a radical break with the past or one that stresses continuity with the *ancien regime*?
4. "Long reigns tend to generate reactions in the successive ones." Illustrate with at least two examples from the history of the Habsburg Monarchy.
5. What, if any, were the interactions of the various enlightenments with actual political and social changes?
6. Discuss in detail the changes wrought in Prussia by the Great Elector.