

## Early Modern Europe

Spring 2010

Answer one question in each section. You must do a total of three (3) questions. Be sure each essay has a clear line of argument, addresses as many dimensions of the question as possible, and offers relevant, persuasive evidence from specific secondary sources wherever appropriate. Good luck!

### Section I: Answer one question

A. How has the history of daily life shaped our understanding of early modern Europe, 1400-1650? Please discuss specific topics in the history of daily life as well as the historiographic context(s) of the approach. Please consider possible future directions for the history of daily life in early modern Europe.

B. To what extent did early modern Europeans produce a reformation of the body in the sixteenth century? Discuss in relation to historical topics such as images, the Eucharist, marriage, or ecclesiology, and in relation to historiographic developments which promoted or hindered arguments about a reformation of the body.

### Section II: Answer one question

A. The early modern period was one of tremendous cross-cultural contact and exchange, stimulating shifts in how people understood their immediate circumstances and the broader world around them. Recently, early modernists have begun to analyze representations of these cosmological transformations in a variety of 'alternative' sources such as art, architecture, and especially, cartography. Review this literature: what are the power relations embedded in the representation or organization of space in these types of sources? What assumptions do historians bring with them in their approaches to these 'alternative' sources? How do representations of 'self' transform as a result of contact with colonial others? How does the literature on Jewish diaspora and exile complement or contrast with other scholarship on space?

B. In *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1998) Mary Louise Pratt outlined her conception of transculturation as part of the colonial experience. Define transculturation. How has the scholarship on transculturation evolved since the publication of Pratt's book? Evaluate transculturation comparatively as a phenomenon in both the early Spanish and British empires with attention to the relationship between colonized and colonizers, colony and metropole in each context. How have asymmetrical exchanges and disparate power relations structured the imperial gaze, and what roles have historians assigned to subordinate groups in this process?

### Section III. Answer one question

A. Based on your readings in the history of the senses, explain how sensory experiences are both products of culture and of history. Specifically for the early modern period, what would appear on a "timeline" of the most definitive moments in the history of the senses?

B. Discuss the relationship between elite and popular culture as outlined by historians of early modern Europe. How have they defined "elite" and "popular" culture and how have they analyzed the relationship between the two? What major debates exist in the understanding of popular and elite culture and how do you assess the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments advanced?

### **Early Modern History**

PLEASE ANSWER THREE OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS, CHOOSING AT LEAST ONE FROM EACH CATEGORY.

Read through the questions carefully and decide how you wish to answer them. Take a deep breath. Relax. Good luck. Enjoy.

#### **Category 1: Politics, Society, Economy**

1. Traditionally, scholars drew a firm line, separating Russian autocracy out from the common stream of European monarchy. Does more recent scholarship confirm this opinion? Compare and contrast Russian monarchy under Aleksei Mikhailovich and Peter I with some royal contemporaries, “absolutist” monarchs of France, Spain, or anywhere else in Europe, including the Ottoman Empire. What do these monarchies have in common, institutionally, symbolically, and socially, according to more recent studies? What seem to be their enduring differences? Note: this question is not asking you to compare some generic “West” against a Russia, itself taken as a proxy for a generic “East.” Speak rather of specific points of comparison, whenever possible.
2. The sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries were a period of tremendous political extension for Europe, as European sovereigns and subjects laid claim to huge territories in Asia and the Americas. Yet the effect of this imperial expansion on Europe’s political institutions, economy, and social structure remains hotly debated. Some historians see the new colonies as still embryonic and peripheral in importance for Europe’s developing monarchies, while others see imperialism as the main driver of modernizing change. How do you understand the relationship between imperialism and Europe’s early modern political, social and economic development? What seem to you to be the areas of strongest imperial influence? Which the weakest? Be attentive to shifts over time and national differences as necessary, and feel free to discuss the Russian and / or Ottoman Empires, as well.
3. You are charged with the educational mission of teaching an upper-level undergraduate lecture course on the history of early modern Europe broadly conceived, from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century through the French Revolution. 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 ordinary and privileged people, ideas, economic production, and governments in your coverage.

## **Category 2: Culture, Ideas, Encounter**

1. Ever since Robert Darnton famously turned scholarly attention to the “business of Enlightenment” in the late 1960s, historians have been exploring the commercial and social histories of early modern intellectual production. Numerous works have examined the organizational, practical, and material culture that underpinned the idea of a “Republic of Letters” (both in the 17<sup>th</sup>, and the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries), including but not limited to works on early modern publishing, and reading publics. What are some of the big lessons learned by this close attention to practice? What are some of its analytical and explanatory limitations?

2. Specialist scholars today often sharply critique the concept of the Enlightenment as old-fashioned, over-generalized, and ideologically invested, and yet books with the word in the title continue to appear in profusion. Survey the past and present historiography of the European Enlightenment and then reflect on what, in your estimation, does and does not remain valid about the Enlightenment as a concept and category in professional historical studies today.

3. Define the term “identity” and discuss its applicability to the early modern period. What types of identity existed; how were they created and transmitted; and how did they relate to each other? How did encounters with non-Europeans impact the production and experience of identity in early modern Europe? Be sure to give concrete empirical examples as well as thematic and historiographic analysis.

Preliminary Examination  
Early Modern Europe

Spring 2009

Choose and answer one question in each section. You must respond to a total of three (3) questions. Be sure each response has a clear line of argument, addresses as many dimensions of the question as possible, and offers relevant, persuasive evidence from specific secondary sources. Good luck!

Section I: Answer one question

A. Contrast the Church of Rome in 1500 with Western European Christianity in 1600. We suggest you cover three distinct fields of contrast, such as: popular piety, theology, daily life, gender, political authority, or Christian institutions.

B. Why was ritual such a focal point for conflict and violence in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries?

C. How and why did the European Reformation begin in the Holy Roman Empire? How has this question been addressed or overlooked in the field of Reformation studies over the last decades?

Section II: Answer one question

A. How have historians conceptualized empire during the early modern period? What developments in early modern Europe have historians studied under the concept of empire, and how successful are these approaches? How does empire affect our understanding of major early modern themes (such as religion, race, gender, nation-state, modernity)? (Be sure to define your terms)

B. How did the position of religious minorities change in Western Europe during the early modern period? What were the underlying catalysts for these changes and how were they related to larger developments in European culture, religion and politics?

Section III: Answer one question

A. You have been asked to create a syllabus for a 300-level course on Early Modern Europe. Write the first day's introduction in which you set up the course. Your essay should explain the specific themes on which you would focus and the works (primary and secondary) you would assign for your class. How would you structure the topics over the course of the semester? Indicate primary sources where you think they will be appropriate.

B. For scholars today, how useful is the category “early modern”? For example, how useful is the period "early modern" for understanding gender history? How does it inform attempts to write both global and European histories?

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**Preliminary Examination: Early Modern Europe  
Spring 2008**

Prepared by: Professor Clare Crowston, Department of History  
Professor John Randolph, Department of History

Instructions: In essay form, answer three of the following six questions. Make sure to write on at least one question from each of the two sections (that is, pick one question from one category and two questions from the other, your choice). Write clearly, analytically, and make sure to discuss relevant secondary literature explicitly and by name.

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**Category 1: Culture, Ideas, Identity**

1. How has the notion of "popular culture" been used to write the history of early modern Europe? What have been the strengths and weakness of this concept? Based on your reading, did relations between popular and elite classes change in this period and what significant changes did "popular culture" undergo?
2. How has the recent emphasis on practices and institutions, rather than ideas alone, changed our understanding of European cultural history? What was the relationship between ideas and practices in the Enlightenment or other cultural movements? To what extent did the practices of culture affect the reception of ideas?
3. Define "identity" and discuss its applicability to the early modern period. How were identities formed, transmitted and altered over time? What types of identity existed and how did they relate to each other? Be sure to give concrete empirical examples as well as thematic and historiographical analysis and refer to at least three European countries.

**Category 2: Politics and Society**

4. Much recent work on early modern statecraft has focused on questions of space: both how European governments sought to comprehend and control their expanding dominions; and how various state actors sought to explain and represent their own territorial authority. How important, in your view, is this line of inquiry, and what aspects of early modern politics does it help us understand more clearly?

5. Some historians have argued that the gradual emergence of a "public sphere" transformed European political, cultural, economic, and social life. Trace the historiography of the "public sphere". To what extent did the "public" (and by extension, the "private") become new and crucial elements of European life and how significant were their effects?

6. Traditionally, scholars drew a firm line, separating Russian autocracy out from the common stream of European monarchy. Does more recent scholarship confirm this opinion? Compare and contrast Russian monarchy under Aleksei Mikhailovich and Peter I with some royal contemporaries, "absolutist" monarchs of France, Spain, or anywhere else in Europe, including the Ottoman Empire. What do these monarchies have in common, institutionally, symbolically, socially, according to more recent studies? What seem to be their enduring differences? Note: this question is not asking you to compare some generic "West" against a Russia, itself taken as a proxy for a generic "East." Speak rather of specific points of comparison, whenever possible.

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Preliminary Examination

Early Modern Europe  
Professors Clare Crowston and Craig Koslofsky  
Fall 2007

Answer one question in each section. You must respond to a total of three (3) questions. Be sure each essay has a clear line of argument, addresses as many dimensions of the question as possible, and offers relevant, persuasive evidence from specific secondary sources. Good luck!

Section I: Answer one question

1. Why was ritual such a focal point for conflict and violence in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries?
2. Was there a "reformation of the body" in the sixteenth century? Discuss in relation to several of the following: images, celibacy, the Eucharist, relics, death, women's bodies, and daily life.
3. How and why did the European Reformation begin in the Holy Roman Empire?

Section II: Answer one question

1. 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?
2. The eighteenth century has been interpreted both as a period of significant new opportunities for women and as the culmination of a long decline in status since the Middle Ages. What side would you take in this debate and why? (be sure to reference multiple aspects of life – economic, political, social, etc).
3. To what extent has culture replaced social and economic factors as an explanation for the origins and outcome of the French Revolution?

Section III: Answer one question

1. Discuss the relationship between elite and popular culture as outlined by historians of early modern Europe. How have they defined "elite" and "popular" culture and how have they analyzed the relationship between the two? What major debates exist in the understanding of popular and elite culture and how do you assess the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments advanced?

2. In the early modern period the household was a site of production and consumption. How has research on the history of household in production and in consumption contributed to our understanding of early modern Europe?

3. How does a focus on the history of consumption enhance our understanding of early modern Europe, 1500-1800? Please refer to specific scholars and trends in your response.

Preliminary Examination

"The Human Body and the Animal Body in Medieval and Early Modern Europe"

September 1, 2006

A. Please respond to **two** of these four questions.

1. What is the future of the field of human-animal history? In what direction(s) is the historiography moving? Please limit your answer to one or two trends or themes.
2. How did early modern Europeans use animals to classify people? Discuss in terms of race, social position, and gender.
3. Assume you are teaching an advanced undergraduate course in early modern Europe, c.1400-1800. How would you integrate animal history into your syllabus? Please feel free to discuss readings (secondary literature, primary sources), assignments, themes, etc.
4. How did European answers to the question "what distinguishes humans from animals?" change over the period from 1500 to 1800?

B. Please respond to **one** of these two questions.

5. How can the history of animals contribute to our understanding of gender in medieval and early modern Europe?
6. How did learned Europeans' classification of animals change from the medieval bestiary to the system of Linnaeus?

END

November 28, 2005

preliminary examination for

"Religion and Belief in Early Modern Europe"

examiner: Koslofsky

comments on the examination

I. Please respond to one of the following.

B. In the final section of *Christianity in the West, 1400-1700* John Bossy discusses "Migrations of the Holy." He argues that "Divorces between the sacred and the body social were to be everyday events in the sixteenth century" (p. 154). Discuss this argument, providing examples and/or counter-examples from the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries.

I appreciate that you chose the more complex of the two choices in this section and responded with a strong counterargument. Two issues come to mind in light of your response that the sacred and the body social became even more intertwined, as "Protestantism brought with it even more penetration of the sacred into lay social existence." First, early modern Protestant (and Roman Catholic) authorities were not very successful at penetrating lay daily life: their programs were ambitious, but results are harder to see. My former colleague at the MPI for History in Goettingen, Juergen Schlumbohm, has written about this in an article on law and its enforcement in early modern Germany. My second issue concerns the relationship of Protestant culture to secularization. In a very vague way, Bossy's argument is based on the sense that at some point, Protestant culture became more secular, focused on science, rational, etc. than medieval culture - an echo of the Weber thesis. While I see that your response to Bossy is persuasive and well argued, I wonder how one would deal with the larger argument that Protestant thought and secularization are related in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries? See Jonathan Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible* (2005) for more on this.

II. Please respond to one of the following.

B. How would you shape a "history of unbelief" from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries?

Your response takes up the important historiography and offers an interesting contrast to your take on Bossy above. Overall a very effective response.

III. Please respond to one of the following.

A. How did the transformation of Western Christianity in the sixteenth century affect early modern Jewish life and thought?

Prof. Sutcliffe is better qualified than I to assess your response here. I think you've presented some of the key figures in the early Enlightenment and the ambiguous place of Judaism in their thought.

I appreciate that you chose the more complex of the two choices in this section and responded with a strong counterargument. Two issues come to mind in light of your response that the sacred and the body social became even more intertwined, as "Protestantism brought with it even more penetration of the sacred into lay social existence." First, early modern Protestant (and Roman Catholic) authorities were not very successful at penetrating lay daily life: their programs were well laid, but results are harder to see. My former colleague at the Max Planck Institute for History in Göttingen, Jürgen Schumbach, has written about this in an article on law and its enforcement in early modern Germany. My second issue concerns the relationship of Protestant culture to secularization. In a very vague way, Bossy's argument is based on the notion that at some point, Protestant culture became more secular, founded on science, rational, etc. and different culture - an echo of the Weber thesis. While I see that you respond to this in a persuasive and well argued, I would like to see you deal with the larger argument that Protestant culture was not secularized in the way that we think of it. See Jonathan Sacks, The Enlightenment Idea, 2003, for more on this.

Preliminary Examination  
Sept. 2004  
Minor field in European History

The total time available for this examination is five hours. Choose one question from each of the three sections. You should write three answers in all. Be sure to discuss specific scholars and publications in your answers.

I.

A. Discuss the development of leftist ideology from the late nineteenth century to the present. How have intellectuals reshaped leftist ideology in response to concrete political and social events? Discuss for thinkers from at least two major European countries.

B. Why do revolutionary events in France during the late eighteenth century provide the major dividing point between early modern and modern European history? What was different in France, and European history generally, before and after the period 1789-1799? Similarly, why has the French Revolution - as opposed to, say, the Napoleonic era, the Restoration, or the 1830 and 1848 revolutions - between the focus of so much French historiography in the past generation? How would the major interpreters of the Revolution through the years respond to these questions?

Part II


A. It was once said that cultural history is "history with the politics left out." To what extent has this been true of recent cultural history? Discuss, with attention to the strengths and weaknesses of specific works.

B. After intensive historiographical cultivation for generations, why does "the Industrial Revolution" now appear to be waning as a subject of professional scholarly study? What are the most significant past readings of the industrialization of the European economy, and can you think of recent, fresh ways the subject is being or might be conceived?

### Part III

- A. Discuss comparatively and analytically the major models of national identity formation from the past generation. What case studies do the leading commentators on nationalism employ, and how have their choices informed their interpretations? Which readings do you find most compelling and why?
- B. How have studies of colonial encounters changed our conception of European history? To what extent is it still possible to write European history without reference to the wider, non-European world?

March 30, 2004

preliminary examination for 

Early Modern Europe (1500-1789) (Koslofsky and Sutcliffe)

I. Please respond to one of the following.

A. How and why did the European Reformation begin in the Holy Roman Empire?

B. Contrast the Church of Rome in 1500 with European Christianity in 1600. We suggest you cover three distinct fields of contrast, such as: popular piety, theology, daily life, ritual, political authority, or Christian institutions.

C. In the final section of *Christianity in the West, 1400-1700* John Bossy discusses "Migrations of the Holy." He argues that "Divorces between the sacred and the body social were to be everyday events in the sixteenth century" (p. 154). Discuss this argument, providing examples and/or counter-examples from the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries.

II. Please respond to one of the following.

A. "Absolutism." So what *is* in a name?

B. How would you shape a "history of unbelief" from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries?

C. To what extent has research on the history of private life and on the history of reading and of the book changed our understanding of the Enlightenment?

III. Please respond to one of the following.

A. Why was ritual such a focus of conflict in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries?

B. Does the "birth of intimacy" proposed by Annik Pardailhé-Galabrun serve as a useful theme in the history of early modern daily life?

C. To what extent did western Europe "secularize" over the course of the early modern period, and why? (Or why not?) If you prefer, you may restrict your answer to one or two countries of your choice.

Early modern period of Europe...  
A. ...  
B. ...  
C. In the final section of Christianity of the East, 1500-1700 John Bossy discusses "Migrations of the Holy." He argues that "divorces between the sacred and the body earth, were the everyday events in the sixteenth century" in Italy and the rest of Europe, providing examples and/or counter-examples from the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries.

II. Please respond to one of the following:

A. "Absolutism." So what is in a name?

B. How would you shape a "history of unbelief" from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century?

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