Cultural and Intellectual History

NB: The following examination is in two parts, developed independently by each of the examiners. Please see each section for the particular instructions for that part.

Section One: Cultural and Intellectual History (China; Prof. Chow)

Please write on two of the following questions.

1. The intellectual history of the Qing period has received much attention and very different treatments from China scholars. Please explain the various explanations for the rise of “evidential scholarship” (kaozhengxue) in the Qing. In your discussion, please make reference to the works by—including but not limited to—William Theodore de Bary, Benjamin Elman, Kai-wing Chow, and Ying-shi Yu.

2. Matteo Ricci has been criticized for accommodating to the beliefs and practices of the Chinese. In your opinion did Ricci faithfully introduce Christianity to the Chinese through accurate translation of the Christian doctrine? The debate over Ricci’s introduction of Christianity is but one example of the enormous problem of translation cross cultures. Can cultures be translated? Please discuss works that bear upon this issue of cross cultural translation, especially those by Jacques Gernet, David Mungello, and James Hevia.

3. What is Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism? What major trends do you see in the study of Confucianism? Please review and assess the major works recently published on the multifold dimensions of Confucianism. Make reference to relevant works as much as you can.

Section Two: Cultural and Intellectual History (Europe; Prof. Randolph)

Please write a medium-length (5-7 pages) answer to one of the following three questions. Your answer should be analytical in nature, and historiographically oriented. However, you need not provide commentary on many individual works or an extensive bibliography. Focus on concepts that you think are germane to your readings and identify only a few crucial works as milestones. Take the time to plot out your answer: the emphasis here is on clarity and basic soundness of presentation, rather than length or complexity.

1. Since the French Revolution, one may hypothesize, the Enlightenment has been associated first and foremost with the intellectual production of philosophes. To what extent, in this regard, has the historiography of Enlightenment been primarily a species of intellectual history? How has this changed over time, and
how do you see the relationship between intellectual history and Enlightenment playing out in the future?

2. Material culture; space; and sociability have been three cultural-historical prisms, through which the study of Enlightenment has been conducted in the past three decades. Pick one of these interpretive paradigms. How has it shifted our understanding of what the Enlightenment was, as a phenomenon; or has it not?

3. For a long time, discussions of the early modern world were dominated by attempts to reconstruct the “mentalité” of people in the past; in the past few decades, “identity” has been a prime focus of research, as well. How would you compare these two interpretive paradigms (for example, in terms of the subjects they study, their goals, and ultimate meaning)? Do either of them have, in your view, a particular importance for historians of the early modern period?