I. Religion and Identity
1) Recent scholarship has argued for the instability of religious identity in early modern Europe. A slightly earlier theme in the study of early modern Europe argued for the deep significance of religious ritual in the same culture (see for example Davis, "Rites of Violence"). Discuss each of these themes, ritual and identity, in recent scholarship, then suggest how they can inform one another.

2) What were the most important categories of “difference” in early modern Europe and how did they change over the period covered by this exam? How have scholars discussed changing categories of difference in Western Europe in the early modern centuries? You could consider "toleration / intolerance" in your response.

II. Politics and Authority
1) Summarize the stakes and the status of the debate on "absolutism" over the last twenty-five years or so. How does an "imperial" perspective change the way we can compare recent scholarship in the field?

2) What have we learned about the economic, social, cultural and political lives of ordinary people in Western Europe over the past twenty-five years? What kinds of agency did they possess and what were its limitations? Is there any sense in discussing “popular culture” any more?

III. Society and Economy
1) How has the intense focus on women and gender in early modern Europe over the past twenty-five years changed our understanding of big issues in the historiography, including (but not limited to) state formation, religious life, economic development, cultural production, etc.? (Pick at least three issues to discuss.)

2) How did the household economy, family structures, work, and consumption develop between 1450 and 1750 in Europe? How have scholars linked these issues (households, family structure, work, and consumption) to other key themes in the period, such as state formation, the Reformations, or European expansion?