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?