September 2010

Preliminary Examination in Eastern Europe

Instructions: Please answer one question from each of the following sections (for a total of 3 essay answers). 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 One

1. How and by whom has Eastern European nationalism been theorized? Describe briefly and critically the intellectual genealogy of this typology. What is the assessment of Eastern European nationalism within the larger European framework? Please mention briefly the major theoretical exponents and give appropriate historiographical examples.

2. What is the significance of the backwardness paradigm in assessing the character of Eastern European modernity? Who are its chief exponents? What is the empirical foundation on which it is based? What is the critical response to this thesis?

Section Two

1. Assess the role of World War One and its aftermath for the formation of national boundaries in Eastern Europe. In what way did the Ottoman or Habsburg imperial legacy of ethnic multiplicity complicate the national building process? Give concrete examples and compare at least two concrete historical cases (preferably one from East-Central and one from South-Eastern Europe).

2. Outline the main characteristics of political life in the Balkans (Yugoslavia, Greece, Romania, Bulgaria and Albania) in the interwar period. What are the main points of similarity and difference? What explains traditions of extreme right or left wing politics, and how (if at all) did these shape behavior during the war and the immediate postwar arrangements?

Section Three

1. In the aftermath of the civil wars in Yugoslavia of the 1990s, a tremendous body of scholarly and journalistic literature was devoted to the rise and fall of the country, often couched in terms of a doomed experiment. Attempt a critical synthesis of this body of work, comparing it to the historiography on Yugoslavia before the disintegration. What are the achievements, failures, lacunae? You don't have to be exhaustive, but point to trends, and focus on the academic output.

2. A substantial historiography has been devoted lately to how societies dealt with the legacy of Word War Two (both in its immediate context and as memory). Discuss the main lines of research and the chief foci of interest in this literature. Give concrete examples and compare at least two concrete historical cases (preferably one from East-Central and one from South-Eastern Europe).