April 2011

Preliminary Examination in Eastern Europe

Instructions: Please answer one question from each of the following three sections. 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

1. The traditional meta-narrative of Eastern European history posits its pre-modern and modern period (and sometimes even its late medieval period) as one lagging behind developments in Western Europe. Discuss the origins and evolution of the backwardness paradigm and its significance 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?

2. How and by whom has Eastern European nationalism been theorized? Describe briefly and critically the intellectual genealogy of its 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.

SECTION II

1. Discuss the failure of liberal democracy in the Balkans by analyzing the main characteristics of political life in 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? Is there historiographical consensus on these issues?

2. Assess the results of the First World War in terms of redrawing the state boundaries in Eastern Europe. What was the relative share of the different imperial legacies, nationalist movements, or great power interests? How are these assessed in the relevant literature?

SECTION III

1. How did the Balkan nation-states deal with the problem of ethnic heterogeneity during the short twentieth century? Describe and compare the strategies utilized by the Balkan governments from the end of the First World War until the fall of communism in 1989 to deal with their ethnic minorities. Was there something specific to the region or was it following patterns that were common for all of Europe and the world?

2. Describe/compare the consolidation of communist power in Eastern Europe after the Second World War. Analyze the factors, as well as main historiographical explanations that account for the turn to national communism with a particular emphasis on the Romanian case.