Preliminary Exam in Global Histories  
Spring 2012

Answer one question from each section. You must answer 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

A. “The global” is both a gargantuan category and a shorthand for everything from neoliberalism to transnationalism, from capitalism to imperialism. Make an argument for the best working definitions of the term for students aiming both to engage with and contest the colonial and postcolonial entanglements of the world before the 21st century. What is the proportional role of subjects like non-human history, empire, and even connectivity itself in shaping global narratives?

B. You have been asked to design an introductory undergraduate course on global history covering the period 1300 to the present. While your department chair has given you a great deal of flexibility in terms of how to structure the course, she would like to see “non-Western” histories fully incorporated into the survey’s approach and questions of method addressed as well. Describe the course syllabus with attention to chronology as well as integrating both domestic and imperial narratives.

Section II

A. How might you give a lecture on the slave trade for a global history course? How would you explain the widespread persistence of such a systematic and seemingly obvious abuse of human rights in the era of Enlightenment and liberalism? How might you present the slave trade as a fundamental, representative, and quintessential, rather than anomalous, aspect of globalization in the early modern and modern world? How would you discuss its relation to other major themes in the course such as migration, labor, gender, and race?

B. How do categories of gender and the body operate as orientation devices (pace Sara Ahmed) in shaping narratives of global history? Make a case for the centrality of gender and the body across early modern and modern time, accounting for their differential impact in the west and non-west as well. Be sure to attend to their capacity to illuminate related categories of social differentiation like race and class as well.

Section III

A. As a national story, Germany’s modern history has arguably been cross-cut by global forces and ambitions in very unique ways. War, empire, fascism – each of these signature themes has its global dimensions. Assess the impact of global history on German historiography in the last two decades, offering a genealogy of “global German history,” a diagnosis of its limits and a prognosis of its future.

B. Emphases on mobility, cultural exchange, contact (friction), and the body have been key features of global histories in the last 10 years. Assess this phenomenon, weighing the pros and cons of the preoccupation with migration, circulation and bodies across a variety of connected landscapes. Does mobility, as a category and/or method, upend Eurocentric narratives? If so, how?