Preliminary Examination Global Histories

Spring 2012

Answer one question in each section. You must respond to 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. Good luck!

Section I: Answer one question

A. Are the differences between global, world, comparative, and transnational histories merely semantic, or do they connote different methodological and even epistemological stakes? What place is there for the national and the imperial as analytical categories and historical realities in these historiographies?

B. To expand the scope and inclusiveness of “World History,” many historians have constructed narratives around commodity chains (salt, spices, sugar, cotton, etc.). They study social and historical requirements as well as implications of commodity production, dissemination, and consumption. How does this type of historiography advance and/or limit the study of world histories? What can we learn from this approach in linking intellectual history to world history?

Section II: Answer one question

A. Did science and medicine become global enterprises in the early modern period? What role did empire play for scientific and medical experimentation, development, and transfer? How did metropole and colony interact in the exchange of scientific and medical ideas? Are “modern” medicine, botany, biology, and chemistry inexplicable without global interactions?

B. What is the heuristic value of concepts such as “networks,” “nodes,” “the exotic,” “indigenous,” “web,” “encounter,” “agnotology,” “biocontact zones,” “circulation,” and “contact zones” for the writing of global history in the early modern period? Do they only have heuristic value, or did they actually exist historically?

Section III: Answer one question

A. How did gender and racial considerations and discourses shape the early modern global development of medicine, botany, biology, and other forms of science? Characterize the links between early modern globality and “grammars of difference” as perpetuated through the circulation of bodies, medical knowledge, and commodities.

B. Historicize and problematize the ideas of “indigenous knowledge” and “local knowledge.” To what extent was European knowledge “indigenous” and used in the causes of exploration, expansion, and empire? Is “local knowledge” dependent on international networks? Further, how do ideas of “external” and “internal” colonization contribute to our understanding of Europe’s global projects in the early modern period?