Choose one question from each of the following three sections and write an essay to answer it. Good luck!

A. Comparative:

1. Define the concept of working-class formation and apply it to two of the following societies – England, France, and the USA. Discuss the cultural and political dimensions of this process and suggest a chronological framework for each case. What role did gender play in this process? To what extent, if at all, is the USA exceptional?

2. From Labouring Men to Workers to Steelworkers in America, labor historians have focused on the materiality and meaning of work and production. But what about the materiality and meaning of commodities and consumption? What is the role of consumption and consumer demand in working-class politics, including everyday organizing, social movements, and revolutionary situations?

B. United States.

1. In their critique of the “Old Labor History, the “New Labor Historians” of the 1970s and 1980s claimed that their own approach better captured the historical experience of American workers than their predecessors had. In what sense was this true? What, if anything, did the “New” historians still leave out? Has the scholarship of the past generation made advances over the work of the “New” historians and if so, how? What do you see as the new frontier in terms of research in US working-class history?

2. Taking the periods of the 1830s, 1880s, and 1930s as case studies, discuss the following statement. Use concrete examples to indicate how and why you agree with the statement and where and why it seems to go wrong:

Although American workers never produced truly class conscious organizations and movements, severe class conflict erupted at several junctures in the history of the US. Two big problems stood in the way of developing a truly class-conscious labor movement: (1) How one defined the movement in sociological terms – i.e., who was in and who was not. (2) The ferocious opposition of both employers and the state.

B. Europe:

1. The study of women and gender in European working-class history has evolved substantially from Ivy Pinchbeck's Women Workers in the Industrial Revolution (1930) to Clare Crowston’s Fabricating Women. Where does one now look in order to engender labor history? Discuss the opportunities and challenges European working-class historians have encountered in looking for gender in each of the following sites: the factory, community, family, and the socialist movement. You may freely choose your examples in terms of time period, but be sure to include examples at least two European societies.
2. Why did a socialist revolution occur and survive in Russia in 1917 and not in Germany, with its strong socialist party tradition and large working class? Answer in terms of class formation, working-class culture, and ideology.