MEDIEVAL EUROPE

November, 2009

Answer one question from each section below. Discussions of classic and recent historiography are always pertinent.

Section I

A. Some medieval phenomena have been viewed as formative of modern trends, prejudices, and modes of thought: “the formation of a persecuting society,” “the myth of nations,” “the medieval origins of the modern state.” How valid are such theories? What are their limitations and/or possibilities?

B. Choose one of the themes with which you are most concerned in your own period of study (i.e. late antiquity) and discuss it in relation to the period from 1250 to 1500.

Section II

A. To what extent, and in what ways, did women present a problem for the institutional Church of the Middle Ages? How did the Church (as an institution) deal with that problem (or problems)?

B. Are medievalists overly preoccupied with the history of the body?

Section III

A. Habits of longstanding have encouraged students and teachers of medieval European history to view this period as one of rigid social boundaries and tight authoritarian control (e.g. the nefarious “feudal triangle,” the Dictatus papæ); yet it is also commonly characterized as chaotic, lawless, disorganized. How would you construct an upper-level course in medieval history so as to avoid these paradigms and reflect more recent scholarship?

B. If you were developing an introductory survey of medieval history, organized more-or-less chronologically, where would you place the major breaks (moments for summation and exams), and why?