UIUC Department of History  
Graduate Preliminary Examination  
Modern European History  

April 2014

Directions: Please choose one question from each of the following three categories and answer in essay form. Be sure that your essays have a clear line of argument and engage with both the relevant history and historiography. Discuss specific scholars and texts. The time available for the examination is five hours.

Part I:

1. Comparative Modern Revolutions: From the Glorious Revolution of 1688, to the French Revolution of 1789, to the Russian Revolution of 1917, revolutions in which existing governments were overthrown and replaced by new ruling bodies have long been a privileged topic of historical inquiry. And yet, modern revolutions are not uniquely associated with military conflict or political change. Indeed, from the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries a slew of transformations in the cultural, economic, and social realms are also remembered as revolutions. In what ways does the idea of revolution produce specific understandings of historical change? How do historians utilize this analytic trope? What characteristics are central to its attribution? Write an essay in which you address these questions as you compare and contrast historical understandings of three revolutions that have shaped the history of modern Europe.

2. Urban History: There has been an explosion of historical scholarship in the past few decades that analyzes the urban environment. Making reference to key works on this subject, write an essay in which you discuss how urban history illuminates modern European society as a whole. What does a focus on the urban permit us to see more clearly, and what does it elide? You might want to note the importance of such issues as the public/private split, political economy, bourgeois political power, gender, racial geographies, concepts of cultural hegemony, empire/metropole, or the role of institutions in your response.

Part II:

3. Gender and Europe: Joan Scott’s argument about “gender as a category of historical analysis” erupted into the landscape of European history in the mid-1980s. Thirty years later, what has its impact been on work in the field? Define her terms and assess the methodological and empirical work of gender in the context of histories of social, political and economic life in modern European historiography.

4. Labor history: Historians of class and gender in Britain were locked in battle over the primacy of each category for the better part of two decades. What was the impact of that struggle on the terrain of labor history, and were there similar contests in the French case? With what effects? How does one write labor history through gender and vice versa?
Part III:

5. **What is Modern European History?:** Since its emergence as an academic discipline, Modern European history has been organized mainly in terms of national histories, and weighted heavily towards the big three: Great Britain, France and Germany. In light of the growing interest in trans-nationalism, Eastern Europe, the USSR and “the global” in contemporary scholarship, it might be time to think about other ways to conceptualize modern Europe and its history. How would you go about this? You have been asked to develop a new undergraduate course intended to introduce in-coming students to the major themes in Modern European History. Write a brief opening lecture for this course. In so doing, articulate the central aims of the course and the major historiographical arguments that will inform your teaching. What nations and topics will you cover? What place does Eastern Europe, Russia, the USSR and the global hold in your approach, if any? What about cultural, intellectual, or gender history? Present an argument describing the parameters of the course that justifies (or problematizes) the study of Modern European history at this time.

6. **Imperialism and Colonialism:** Historians have argued over the extent to which European empires and decolonization processes have shaped the nation and national life. Discuss these debates and offer your assessment of the role of imperialism and its afterlives on European society, politics and culture.

**GOOD LUCK!**