A. Western Europe

1. For many decades, historians have criticized the once-dominant Marxist paradigm for interpreting the French Revolution. What have been their main lines of criticism? Are there still valid insights in the Marxist historiography?

2. How have historians interpreted the term “bourgeoisie” for nineteenth-century Europe? Is it a valid and useful concept for historical analysis? Be sure that your answer discusses the historiography of both France and Central Europe (Austria and Germany).

B. Russia and the Soviet Union

1. The revolution in the ownership of the means of production was meant to bring about a revolution in culture as well, and “cultural revolution” was an important feature of Bolshevik ideology in theory and practice. Focusing on the period from 1918 to about 1934, discuss the meanings of “cultural revolution” both in Soviet practice and in historical treatments of the issue. Were these practices sponsored or spontaneously arisen from the relations of production? You may choose examples from particular fields of cultural practice to illustrate your discussion.

2. What is the significance of “empire” in Russian and Soviet history? What categories are most useful for interpreting the relations between the Russian center and the multiple ethnicities and nations that constituted Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union (e.g. empire, imperialism, colonialism, frontier, Orientalism, etc.)? Focusing on the 19th and 20th centuries, what have been the key principles (or ideologies) and forms of Russian relations with non-Russians within the borders of the state?

C. Comparative Russian – Western European Questions

1. What arguments have historians made for the emergence of a civil society in Russia and Germany? Compare the approaches of Russian and German historians. Discuss whether the term “civil society” has a comparable meaning for the two societies and whether it emerges as a useful term for comparative analysis.

2. Abbott Gleason (Totalitarianism, p. 10) writes that “totalitarianism” is an “idea of a radically intrusive state run by people who do not merely control their citizens from the outside, preventing them from challenging the elite or doing things it does not like, but also attempt to reach into the most intimate regions of their lives” that reveals commonalities among the Stalinist USSR, Nazi Germany, and Mussolini’s Italy. For others, “comparative dictatorships” better structures study of these three regimes. Discuss how historians have approached the comparisons of these three interwar European regimes. What are the elements on which they base these comparisons?