Section I

1. Design/outline an encyclopedia essay or a lecture series on the political history of the 20th c. Middle East. What are the main themes and sub-themes you would use to organize your discussion, and what interpretational emphases would work best? What difference, if any, does the Arab Spring make in the overall narrative?

2. The nineteenth-century reform movement known as the Tanzimat has been described as europeanization/westernization/modernization, essentially a reaction to an external impetus and inspiration. Alternatively, some authors emphasize the indigenous roots of the reform process. What are their main arguments and can their views be reconciled?

Section II

1. An enduring concern in historical and social science scholarship on the Middle East is the role of religion and religious leaders in politics and society. Explain how those roles changed during the 19th and 20th centuries in the Ottoman Empire (including Egypt) and its successor states, and Iran. What factors account for different outcomes in different states/societies?

2. What can be learned about Middle Eastern history from the study of medicine and public hygiene? Assess the state of the literature on this topic. What changes should be highlighted? What gaps need to be investigated? How does it connect with other historical topics, and how could it be integrated into the “mainstream” narrative?

Section III

1. Albert Hourani suggested that we should regard Arab nationalism and Islamism, or “political Islam,” as kindred movements. Others, of course, have stressed the ideological differences and political competition between the two. What are the arguments and is it possible to reconcile them?

2. Since c. 1800 the Middle East has been an arena of competition among the major world powers. Outline the history of that competition and explain how imperialism and neo-imperialism in all of their forms have affected the course of Middle Eastern history. Are there patterns that can be identified?