Section I

1. The traditional meta-narrative of Middle Eastern history posits the period from the end of the sixteenth century into the nineteenth century as one of “decline,” followed by a period of “reform” and/or modernization. Discuss the origins and evolution of that narrative, the critical responses to it, and alternative visions.

2. Late 19th century Islamic modernism is often presented as a “response” to “the Western impact” but there is also an alternative interpretation that emphasizes the “indigenous roots” of Islamic reformism in the Islamicate world of the 18th century. Clarify the events, people, ideas, and/or movements being referred to, and explain the main interpretational arguments and what is at stake.

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. The literature on women, gender, and the family in Middle Eastern history has developed unevenly in terms of chronological “coverage,” sources used, and themes or subjects addressed. Assess the literature you have sampled that addresses this history. Is it possible at this point to construct an outline of this history during the past two to three centuries? What changes should be highlighted and how would they be explained? What gaps need to be investigated? And how could this history be integrated into “mainstream” narratives?

Section III

1. Explain the histories of Islamism and the various nationalisms with which it has co-existed in the Arab countries, Iran, and Turkey, to the present. What are the main themes and interpretational frameworks, and which offer the best explanations?

2. Since c. 1800 the Middle East has been an arena of competition among the major world powers. 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?