September 2015

Preliminary Examination in Ideologies of Modernity

Instructions: Please answer one question from each of the following three sections. Be sure each essay has a clear line of argument, addresses as many dimensions of the question as possible, and offers relevant, persuasive evidence from specific secondary sources wherever appropriate. Good luck!

Section I. Theories of nationalism

1. When and in what circumstances was the general historiographical consensus around the modern origins of nations and nationalism established? Please discuss its main theoretical exponents and give the appropriate historiographical examples from your field of study. In what ways does the thesis about the “ethnic origins of nations” challenge or refine the modernist interpretation of nationalism and the nation state? What is the empirical foundation on which it is based? What is the historiographical response to this thesis?

2. How and by whom has Eastern European nationalism been theorized? Describe briefly and critically the intellectual genealogy of the existing typologies and dichotomies. What is the assessment of Eastern European nationalism within the larger European framework? Please mention briefly the major theoretical exponents and give appropriate historiographical examples.

Section II. Nationalism and Marxism

3. The incompatibility between communism and nationalism and especially Marxism’s myopia toward nationalism’s force has become a widely shared cliché. Discuss how the nexus nationalism-communism has been addressed in the literature: more concretely how have scholars synchronized Marxist theory with theories of nationalism from Marx onwards? Confine your answer within the period from the mid-nineteenth century to the Second World War.

4. How would you design a graduate course on Comparative Marxism and Nationalism in a global context? Your provisional syllabus should contain: 1) a rationale for the subject; 2) three to five conceptual rubrics through which you would teach the material; 3) at least one example, taken from a communist regime during the second half of the twentieth century, of a course assignment designed to enable students to develop research skills in this arena.

Section III. Culture and Nationalism

5. Much of the scholarship on nationalism and culture discusses the role either of intellectuals or "the people" in the origins of cultural nationalism. Recent literature, however, has also brought to light the key part played by governments with explicitly nationalizing motivations. Write an essay that analyzes state-run cultural nationalism, making sure to discuss various case studies drawn from several major regions of Europe.

6. Two common criticisms of historians' work in the field of culture and nationalism
are that the fundamental term "culture" is used by scholars in quite different ways and that the term is vague, elastic, or over-inclusive. What is your response to these criticisms? Write an essay outlining the range of models and meanings of "culture" in the relevant historical scholarship. How do different working definitions of culture shape the analysis and interpretation that results? How can scholars produce rigorous work in this field? Finally, what model or models of cultural do you find most compelling and powerful, and why?