Global History Prelim

Spring 2015

Choose three questions from the six below -- answer 3 questions in all. Your responses should be supported by a clear argument, a persuasive analysis and well-chosen examples. Good luck!

1. In what ways has the historiography of the “Atlantic world” been global in scope or scale or method? What does the Atlantic world -- as a category, an orientation device and/or a geographical formation -- allow historians to do that, say, the nation-state as a unit of analysis cannot? Assess the state of play in Atlantic world history with an eye to the limits and possibilities of the spaces it has carved out as a global one.

2. Although the Atlantic paradigm has had a happy life, it has drawn criticism. One influential historian, unhappy with the Atlantic approach, wrote that focusing on the Atlantic, “artificially limits the field of vision of its devotees, often blinding them to processes, developments, and conditions of central importance to understanding their figurative little corner of the world.” Discuss strengths and limitations of Atlantic history as an approach to early modern history. Does Atlantic history neglect important topics, such as indigenous histories?

3. Early modern global histories have been written around objects like silver, systems like slavery and individuals like Marco Polo. Is the history of religious exile amenable to global analysis? If so, what would such a history look like? If not, why not? What difference does a polycentric or multi-sited history of exile make to our understandings of early modern “worlds”?

4. How is “empire” an important category for understanding the early modern world, and particularly the Atlantic? Comparing and contrasting the two major imperial structures of the early modern Atlantic—British and Spanish—discuss how scholars have characterized empire in this period. How did Atlantic empires work, how relevant were they, and what were the limits of their power? In developing your answer, refer to important works of scholarship.

5. Your first teaching position is at a large public institution, with 16 week semesters, where there is a great deal of enthusiasm for the development of a course called “Early Modern Worlds” at the 100 level. How would you approach this task? What themes and authors would you emphasize? What kinds of assignments would you give to the students to help them grasp the stakes of focusing on the early modern period as the time of global history? Please note that a detailed syllabus (weekly readings, page numbers, etc.) is not required. Write a rationale for the course and enumerate 3 major sections, elaborating on your themes with 3 books and 3 articles for each.
6. The lenses of Atlantic and global history are useful because they allow scholars to see community-based, local, and "case study" histories in the context of larger trajectories and patterns. Has this been true in the case of histories of religion, religious groups, and religious migrations? Identify key innovative studies about religion and religious groups in the early modern world. What larger trajectories or patterns characterize the history of religion in the early modern world?