UIUC Department of History  
Graduate Preliminary Examination  
Modern European History  
April 2015

Directions: Please choose one question from each of the following three categories and answer in essay form. Be sure that your essays have a clear line of argument and engage with both the relevant history and historiography. Discuss specific scholars and texts. The time available for the examination is five hours.

Part I:

A. Russian and British imperial historiographies converge and diverge in significant ways. What are the main conceptual frameworks of each; what are their similarities and differences in terms of narrative, methods and thematic preoccupations; and how do the differences between them map on to the historical differences between the empires themselves?

B. What difference does it make to histories of modern western colonialism (1870-1945) when they are written with dissent and disruption – as opposed to extension and hegemony – in the lead? Sketch the main lineaments of imperial narratives (*pace* John Darwin); assess their possibilities and limitations; and make a case for empire histories from the bottom up, with special attention to examples of how anticolonial nationalism might drive the story.

Part II:

A. Alpinism sits at the uneasy intersection between the historiographies of sport, tourism, and exploration. While they often take empire and colonialism into account, to date, these bodies of scholarship are primarily organized in terms of the nation. Write an essay discussing how histories of sport, tourism, and exploration problematize histories of nationalism in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

B. From the Glorious Revolution of 1688 to the French Revolution of 1789 to the Russian Revolution of 1917, revolutions in which existing governments were overthrown and replaced by new ruling bodies have long been a privileged topic of historical inquiry. And yet, revolutions are not uniquely associated with military conflict or political change. Indeed, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries a slew of transformations in the cultural, economic, and social realms—industrial, consumer, sexual, etc.—are also remembered as revolutions. In what ways does the idea of revolution produce specific understandings of historical change? How do historians utilize this analytic trope? What characteristics are
Part III:

A. Since its emergence as an academic discipline, Modern European history has been organized mainly in terms of national histories, and weighted heavily towards the big three: Great Britain, France and Germany. In light of the growing interest in Eastern Europe, the former USSR, transnationalism, and “the global,” in contemporary scholarship, it might be time to think about other ways to conceptualize Modern European history. How would you go about this? Write an opening lecture for a general education course on Modern European history. Articulate your intellectual aims and identify at least six books and a selection of articles that will inform your teaching and structure the semester. What place does Eastern Europe, Russia, the USSR and the global hold in your approach, if any? What about gender history, or the histories of culture, technology, or imperialism? Present an argument describing your course’s parameters and justifying the study of Modern European history at this time.

B. 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 “Geographies of Modern Imperialism” 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 locating Modern Imperialism history in a global context? 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.