PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION ON RELIGION IN PRE-MODERN SOCIETY
April, 2015

Write on THREE of the following questions. As you know, discussion of scholarly literature/debates is always relevant.

1. Discuss the influence of Neo-Platonic philosophy on pagan and Jewish mysticism.

2. Compare and contrast conceptions of the divine feminine in paganism, Judaism, and Christianity. In each case, how important was the divine feminine to religious practice?

3. In what ways did members of subordinate religious groups resist pressure to convert to dominant religions during the pre-modern period? To what extent were forms of resistance shaped by the internal dynamics of the subordinate groups themselves? To what extent were they shaped by the forms of pressure being applied from without?

4. Discuss the role of memory in Judaism and Christianity from antiquity through the Middle Ages. Did the existence of sacred scripture and other authoritative texts constrain or promote the reinvention of the past?

5. One God. Three Persons. A Multiplicity of Divinities. Outline some of the most important similarities and differences in pagan, Jewish, and Christian conceptions of the divine. What factors facilitated dialogue between members of different religious groups? What factors made such dialogue more difficult?