BRITAIN SINCE CA. 1450

Please answer ONE (1) question from Part I and ONE (1) question from Part II. You are allowed a total of four hours to complete this exam (two hours per question.) You are on your honor not to consult any materials, including notes or papers or anything stored in your computer. You are also on your honor not to discuss the exam or its content with any faculty or student until the exam period is over.

PART I: Early Modern Britain (answer one question):

1. For some time now, social historians, economic historians, gender historians and others have told us that traditional periodization has little relevance for the subjects and processes they study. Is it therefore still possible to talk about a “Tudor-Stuart era”? If so, what defines the period and what makes it coherent? If not, how else might we think about the years between about 1500 and 1700?

2. Peter Marshall has recently written that “[d]eciding when it was that the English Reformation came to an end has become an enjoyable parlor game among historians.” How would you join in this game? When, in your evaluation, did the Reformation end and on what basis can we make such a judgment?

3. Define and outline your principal field of interest in early modern British history. What are, in your evaluation, the two or three most important readings on this subject? How have they contributed to and influence the shape of this field? Be as specific as possible.

4. Was there a crisis in gender relations in early modern England? What readings might you examine to try to answer this question?

5. Given the various upheavals that erupted during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (tax rebellions, food riots, religious upheaval, the Civil War, Monmouth’s Rebellion, and the Glorious Revolution, just to name a few), is it fair to argue that early modern English society was a fundamentally unstable one?
PART II: Modern Britain (answer one question):

6. Discuss the importance of Robert Walpole in shaping the British political system in the early 18th century. Describe the kind of system he created and explain the degree of continuity and/or change in its structure that existed or took place from the period 1701-1720. In what sense has the “structure of politics” Walpole created become controversial among historians since the writing of Sir Lewis Namier?

7. Assess the role of Robert Peel as reformer of the Criminal Law in the early 19th century. Contextualize your answer in terms of the changes in humanitarian sensibility taking place in society at large, and discuss the degree of consensus among historians regarding Peel’s reputation as reformer.

8. To what extent is it fair to conclude that William Gladstone remained essentially a Peelite in Politics throughout his career? To what extent does his reputation for having become an extreme Liberal warranted?

9. Examine the causes of the outbreak of WWI from the standpoint of British entry into the conflict. To what extent could Britain have avoided going to war, given the options then available? To what extent was it appropriate to place responsibility for the war on Germany, as the victors did? Discuss the historiography on these points in your answer.

10. Discuss the reasons, short-term and historical, for British entry into the European economic community after 1970. How did Britain’s desire to do so relate to the changing condition of its Empire since WWII? To what extent has its participation in the community been marked by ambivalence?