UCLA, Department of History
European MA/PhD Written Exam
March 24, 25, 26, 2008

BRITAIN SINCE CA. 1450

Please answer one question from Part I and one question from Part II. You are allowed a total of 4 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.

Do not use the same material in answering your two questions.

PART I:

1. The English Reformation is a subject that continues to produce substantial scholarly research. What reading(s) have you found most helpful for your understanding of the religious changes of the era? Are there works of which you are critical? What are they and what are their shortcomings?

2. In what area of early modern British history is the most interesting research being done, in your estimation? Be as specific as you can. What works have you read in this area that you have found especially noteworthy? What new research problems still offer fruitful avenues of inquiry? What progress has been made in making British history more comparative?

3. Most historians agree that Charles I made some serious missteps during his reign. But was the outbreak of the English Civil War inevitable? Defend your answer with concrete evidence and bring into the discussion the relevant historiography.

4. Twenty-five years ago, Keith Wrightson published his landmark study English Society 1580-1680, in which he argued that “the years between 1580 and 1680 also have a special significance of their own for they witnessed significant developments in English society.” To what extent do you agree with Wrightson? How different was English society at the end of the seventeenth century than at the end of the sixteenth? In what ways?

5. The Revolution of 1688-89 has gone from being seen as the triumph of liberty and law to being read as a power grab and a coup. How would you analyze its significance and also discuss the various historiographical interventions made since the event itself.

PART II:

1. Discuss the proposition that the rise of Methodism c. 1740 ff. enabled England to avoid a continental style political and social revolution.
2. Discuss the debate over the standard of living of workers in the British Industrial Revolution from its origins among the classical economists to the modern state of the controversy.

3. Examine the rise of humanitarianism in the British polity c. 1780-1918 by discussing two of the following five movements: penal law reform; anti-slavery agitation and legislation; poor law reform; factory reform; the legal status of women, c. 1850-1918.

4. Explain why Lewis Namier's "The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III" created a revolution in historiography in its day; discuss the modern critiques of Namier's thesis and historical method.

5. Discuss the reasons for British entry into World War I and whether it could have been avoided amid the crisis of July/August 1914. Discuss the relative importance of underlying causes vs. the actions taken by statesmen and governments.