EUROPEAN CULTURAL AND INTELLECTUAL HISTORY SINCE CA. 1450

Please answer one question from Part I and one 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

1. Many historians argue that the seventeenth-century marked a crucial moment in the formation of what is called “modernity.” What arguments do they marshal to support this view and how do they define or conceive of the term modernity? To what extent do you consider this general argument to be compelling?

2. When Jacob Burckhardt published The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy (German title: Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien), he created one of the first great synthetic constructs of modern historiography against which historians still measure their work. How do explain the enormously long fascination for Burckhardt’s vision and to what extent have its major arguments been either affirmed, denied or creatively reinterpreted?

3. Ever since the publication of Kant’s essay, “What is Enlightenment?” the question announced in its title has fascinated scholars and intellectuals. Analyze the major ways in which the Enlightenment has been defined. How would you answer that question?

4. To what extent have gender studies transformed the manner in which the intellectual and cultural history of early modern Europe has been interpreted. Illustrate your answer by concrete examples drawn from your reading.

5. Steven Shapin begins his book, The Scientific Revolution with the paradoxical statement that “there was no such thing as the Scientific Revolution, and this is a book about it.” Without confronting the question whether there was a revolutionary change in natural philosophy or not in the early modern period, discuss the transformation in natural philosophy that began with Galileo, the effects it had upon European thought in the early modern era, and examine how and to what extent the mechanization of nature came to be accepted by Europe’s educated elites at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

6. In modern cultural and intellectual history, a difference is often made between popular and elite culture, between history from the bottom up and so-called elitist history. Do you find this differentiation a valid one for the cultural and intellectual history of the early modern period? Have there been any attempts to mediate between such distinctions and how successful have they been?
Part II

1. In *Stranded in the Present: Modern Time and the Melancholy of History*, Peter Fritzche argues that the break between pre-modern and modern forms of historical consciousness took place around 1800 and was "perhaps the most fundamental outcome of the French Revolution." Europeans in the early nineteenth century, he claims, felt lost, nostalgic, and stranded among the debris of the past in a present they despaired of understanding. But one could just as easily make the argument that the first half of the nineteenth century in Europe was characterized by hopes for a better and radically different future and concrete proposals for how to achieve it. Which side of this argument would you take, and which intellectual figures would you produce to support your position?

2. Historians who write about nineteenth Europe have traditionally stressed the importance of nationalism. What were the intellectual and cultural roots of nineteenth-century nationalism, and how did the growth of nationalism manifest itself in the culture of late nineteenth-century European culture? Please provide specific examples from at least three fields of European cultural activity.

3. Eric Hobsbawn wrote a well-regarded survey of European history between 1875 and 1914 entitled *The Age of Empire*. What impact did overseas empire have on European cultural life during this period? Provide at least three examples of the way that European imperial expansion shaped cultural production in Europe between 1875 and 1914.

4. Modernism is one of the most elusive concepts in modern European cultural history; yet in recent decades it has imposed itself, despite the reservations expressed by historians who doubt it utility. How do you define modernism? Where and when, in your opinion, did it first appear? Please give three examples of modernist culture in three different fields of cultural activity and explain in detail what justifies attaching the label of modernism to these works.

5. It is now widely accepted by historians that the Great War was an important cultural event. If you agree with this assertion, how would you go about supporting it? I am not looking here for a summary of books you have read on this topic, but rather a discussion of the cultural dimensions of the First World War and its legacy that you consider to be important and of long-lasting significance. In framing your argument, please refer to specific cultural works.

6. Who, in your view, is the most important European intellectual figure in the twentieth century and why? There is, of course, no right answer to this question. I am interested in the arguments that you produce to defend your choice, which should touch both on the originality of this person's work and its legacy, as it was refracted through the work of other intellectual and cultural figures.