FRANCE 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. What kinds of people joined the French reformation and why?

2. In the mid sixteenth century it seemed that France would become Protestant. But by 1700, France was overwhelmingly Catholic. How did this occur and why?

3. Peasant rebellions were endemic in France from the late sixteenth to the late seventeenth century. Mysteriously they stopped only to resume rather spectacularly in 1789. Why?

4. How absolute was French absolutism? Who opposed Louis XIV and how did the kind deal with sources of resistance?

5. By the eighteenth century, an “oppositional public sphere” had emerged (Habermas and his followers have argued) in France. Where was this sphere located? What cultural artifacts and institutions encouraged its growth?

Part II

1. Alexis de Tocqueville argued that chief among the reasons for the striking political instability that plagued France in the 50 years following the French Revolution—two revolutions and several uprisings—was administrative centralization and the absolute predominance of Paris. What did he mean by this? Would you agree with his assessment? If so, why, and if not, why not? Were there other factors, if any, that might have contributed to the political turmoil that plagued France in these years?

2. France remained a predominantly agricultural country long after Britain or Germany, for example. How might you explain this phenomenon, and what impact did this have on French society, the economy and political culture? When did France begin to cease to be rural?

3. The experience of the German occupation and the Vichy regime has had a lasting impact on France, contributing to a kind of “Vichy syndrome.” Some have also argued
that this period constituted a civil war. Would you agree with this assessment, and how would you characterize Vichy’s long-term impact on France.

4. France responded to the process of decolonization in the twentieth century in varying ways. What shaped these differing responses? How did the French confront the end of their empire? Cite specific examples and colonies in your answer.

5. The “mission civilisatrice” remains at the core of French political culture and emerged as the hallmark of French republicanism in the two hundred years following the French Revolution. How would you define this project and what impact did it have in metropolitan and colonial France?