EUROPEAN MA/Ph.D WRITTEN EXAM
MARCH 28, 29, 30, 2006

Italian History Since ca. 1450

Answer one question from Part I and one question from Part II. You have a total of four hours. You are on your honor not to consult any other materials, including notes or papers stored on your computer. Please return your completed exam to the graduate office by 5:00 pm today. Good Luck.

Part I: Answer one question

1. Italian society in the period following the Renaissance is traditionally regarded having entered a period of “decline.” Analyze what this concept means, and discuss whether it is still valid in the light of recent scholarship on early modern Italy.

2. Discuss the social, cultural and political differences between northern and southern Italy in the 17th–18th centuries. Discuss whether the divergence between the two regions became more pronounced, or not.

3. Assess the impact of the Counter-Reformation on Italian society and culture in the early modern period.

4. Was there a distinctly Italian Enlightenment? What, if any, were its distinctive features? Or should it be viewed simply as a subset of the European Enlightenment?

5. The revolutionary and Napoleonic period 1796-1814 is often regarded as the point of origin for the modern Italian nation-state, and for the new social and cultural forms that would dominate in the 19-20th centuries. Is this view correct?

Part II: Answer one question

1. In Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa’s novel Il Gattopardo, Tancredi says to his uncle, the Prince, “Se vogliamo che tutto rimanga come e, bisogna che tutto combi.” In your view, does his quotation accurately describe the Risorgimento and its impact on Italian politics and society? If you choose to take issue with this statement, please describe in detail the most important changes that the Risorgimento produced.

2. Most historians agree that one of the long-standing characteristics of modern Italy is the rift between the North and the South. When did the Southern Question first become an issue in Italian politics and culture? What efforts were made to resolve
it, and what were the results of those efforts? To what extent has the Southern Question disappeared as a major issue in contemporary Italian politics?

3. Critics of the liberal regime in Italy (1861-1922) argued that Italian liberalism was severely flawed. Who were the most important of these critics? What arguments did they produce to support their position? How different, in practice, was Italy from other liberal regimes in Europe during the pre-1914 period? To what extent did Giovanni Giolitti attempt to overcome the shortcomings of Italian liberalism, and with what success? To what extent can Italian liberalism be said to have spawned fascism because of its failures?

4. Ever since Renzo De Felice published the first volume of his biography of Mussolini, Mussolini il risvoluzionario, historians have been debating the nature of the Fascist regime. Was it deeply reactionary, as the conventional wisdom had held before the publication of De Felice’s book; or did it have revolutionary aspirations? If it did have revolutionary aspirations, to what extent were they achieved? What prevented their full achievement? What is your own view of the Italian Fascist regime and its relationship to the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, and the liberal tradition as it developed in the nineteenth century?

5. One can argue – indeed, it has been argued – that since 1945 the Italian people have prospered in a failed state. Do you agree or disagree with this characterization of post-1945 Italy? Trace the development of the Italian state since 1945, the groups who have governed it, the most serious problems the Italian state has faced, and the solutions (or non-solutions) to those problems that it has produced. Whenever possible, put the Italian state’s response to its problems in comparative European context. Did the Italians do worse or better than their European partners in the postwar period? Where were the Italians most successful? Where were they least successful? And why?

IN WRITING THIS EXAM, YOU ARE FREE TO DRAW ON THE HISTORIOGRAPHY, WHENEVER RELEVANT, AND SHOULD FEEL FREE TO DO SO. BUT PLEASE FOCUS YOUR ESSAY IN THE THEME OF THE QUESTION AND THE VARIOUS ISSUES THAT THE SUB-QUESTIONS RAISE.