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

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC HISTORY 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.

PART I:

1. It is said that large-scale conflict provides incomparable insights into a society’s basic socioeconomic cum political makeup. Using this proposition as a point of departure, write an essay on the nature and causes of social/political conflict in seventeenth century France or seventeenth century England, or a comparative essay on same, explaining in the process what these conflicts reveal about the nature of the society in which they emerged.

2. “Peasant possession of the means of subsistence constitutes a barrier to economic development.” Explain the rationale behind this assertion. Evaluate it in terms of the trajectories of the French and English economies--and, if you wish, any other additional west European economies, such as those of the Northern and/or Southern Netherlands (Flanders)-- for the period between 1450 and 1750.

3. For a good part of the twentieth century, Malthusian-Ricardian theory provided the most widely accepted framework for understanding the European economy in the epoch before the industrial revolution. Specify the model and explain how it was applied to grasp/explain the long term economic evolution of medieval and early modern Europe, both in terms of income distribution and economic growth. To what extent, and in what ways, does the theory provide a good account of the historical trajectory it aims to comprehend? To what extent, and in what ways, if it all, does it fall short.

4. The rise of trade and towns, leading to what in the recent historiography is termed “Smithian growth,” has long been viewed as the central driving force behind economic development in medieval and early modern Europe. Write an essay in which you lay out the argument and evaluate it in terms of its utility in understanding the economic trajectories of the different European regions during this long epoch—eastern Europe (East Prussia, Poland), western Europe (say France), and England.

5. Write an essay on the demographic revolution, which takes as its point of departure the arguments of Wrigley and Schofield.
PART II:

(When answering the questions below, always add your evaluations and remarks on the most important works on the topic.)

6. Discuss the British Industrial Revolution by addressing why it occurred in Britain, the nature of its spread on the continent, the special case of Scandinavia, and the semi-success or failure of industrialization on the European Peripheries.

7. Analyze the causes and impacts of the Great Depressions in the 19th and 20th centuries Europe; and their peculiarities on the Peripheries.

8. Discuss and analyze the rise and success, and then the failure of the Laissez-faire system during the 19th and 20th centuries.

9. Analyze the rise of post-World War II unique prosperity in Europe: the emergence of the European Union, mixed economy and welfare state. What was the consequence of the challenge caused by globalization?

10. Discuss the socio-economic consequences of state socialism; its results, failure, and collapse.