

PhD Program in History
First Exam in European History, Fall 2020

Please choose two of the questions listed below, one from Part One and one from Part Two. Please prepare your answers in an essay format. Citations are not necessary unless you are quoting, and can be informal. You have eight hours during which to write your essays and submit them as e-mail attachments to Marilyn Weber.

Part I. Write an essay on either topic A or topic B:

- A. How have historians handled matters of periodization from the late Middle Ages through the eighteenth century? Some believe that terms like “The Reformation,” “The Renaissance” or “The Enlightenment” are useful to describe breaks in early modern European history. Others complicate that picture. Please explain the debate with reference to *four* of the following terms. Do you agree with one side or the other?

The Reformation
The Renaissance
The Scientific Revolution
The Printing Revolution
The Seventeenth Century Crisis
The Industrial Revolution
The Enlightenment

- B. Some historians describe the history of Early Modern Europe as one of steady progress on the road to “modernity,” which is often, though not always, related to “secularization.” They look to the past better to understand the present. Others insist on the need to acknowledge “our own estrangement” from the past. Please explain the debate, and describe the advantages and disadvantages of both perspectives. Please discuss paying particular attention to the kinds of sources historians use to make their arguments.

Part II. Write an essay on either topic A or topic B:

- A. Some scholars have pointed to the early modern period as one in which the “modern state” and a new attitude towards government began to take root. Consider the evolution of the nature and role of government across this period. Among the areas to consider are religion; the economy; the military; diplomacy; empire.
- B. How does the lens of gender enrich our understanding of early modern European history? How did the lives of women change over the course of the period we have studied and according to the books we have read? How were their roles and experiences similar to, and different from, the roles and experiences of men?