

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION IN ECONOMIC HISTORY

Answer four of the following questions.

- 1 The development of capital markets in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe has been the focus of much recent attention. Some authors have claimed that European capital markets were integrated as early as 1720, others have argued that the development of capital markets proceeded slowly and was contingent on the creation of an efficient system of public finance. Critically review the literature that makes these arguments. Then tell us which of these two findings is of greater importance to economists of a theoretical and empirical bent and why.
2. Over the last forty years, a debate has been going on between two views of the process of industrialization during the late-nineteenth century. One school of thought has focused on domestic conditions with an emphasis on leading sectors and rates of savings and investment, while the other places the respective cases of industrialization in an international context and highlights comparative advantage and capital flows. Critically review both sides of this literature, and explain where you come down, and why.
3. It is often presumed by economists that labor markets are generally competitive, and that the development and operation of such markets over the long run tend to eliminate the effects of racial, gender, or class discrimination on the earnings of individuals. Drawing from the evidence provided by economic history, to what extent do you agree or disagree with this presumption? Explain.
4. Over the years scholars who argued that technology and farm organization were key to productivity growth have been challenged by those whose work suggests that markets play a key role in spurring output growth. Which of these two views do you think is most important? Further how does all this research inform scholars on the question of what markets are important to growth? Be sure to consider evidence from a broad span of time.
- 5 After a period of neglect, there has been a renewed interest in the link between inequality in economic growth. Please critically summarize the recent literature. Then discuss in what cases the causation runs from factor endowments and technology to inequality and in what cases the causation runs from inequality to economic outcomes.
6. To what extent did well-developed markets characterize the American economy during the colonial era, late-eighteenth century, and early-nineteenth century? What does the evidence indicate about the record of their development? How, or through what mechanisms, did their progress contribute to the pace of economic growth? Explain, citing specific examples when possible.