

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION IN ECONOMIC HISTORY

SPRING 2010

Answer **three** of the following questions. Your answers should each have clear arguments that are well supported by evidence from the relevant readings.

1. Many analogies have been drawn between the current financial crisis and the Great Depression. Based on what academics have written, discuss whether the Great Depression could happen again.
2. Why Britain? Why Europe? Why not China? These three questions have dominated the recent literature on the (first) industrial revolution. How would you answer them?
3. How does our health compare to that of our ancestors and why might it differ? What are the implications of changes in health for population and economic growth?
4. Some scholars argue that recent changes in the income distribution disprove the original Kuznets' conjecture linking economic development and income inequality, while others argue that the US is entering a new Kuznets cycle. Take a stand on this argument and defend your position with historical evidence.
5. In recent decades scholars have developed ways of examining systematically the role that religion, industriousness, and other aspects of culture played in the beginnings of modern economic growth. Assess at least two of these efforts critically.
6. Why doesn't the United States have a European style welfare state? Describe the main difference between social insurance in the United States and Western Europe and provide an historical account for this institutional divergence.