STUDY GUIDE FOR SECOND EXAMINATION

The second examination will be held on Thursday, November 7. It will consist of one essay and a few short answer questions. You will have 50 minutes to complete the examination. The examination will be closed-book and closed-note; however, we encourage you to study by outlining answers to the questions.

See the tips from the first exam for guidelines on studying; they are also available on the course web page as Adobe Acrobat (PDF) files.

The exam will include one of the following questions (you will not be able to choose the question; everyone will answer the same question):

1. In the Middle Ages, European civilization was underdeveloped in comparison with the politically centralized and highly urbanized states of the Islamic world and China, yet Greek science, with its focus on abstract understanding of natural regularities took root in Europe rather than other civilizations. Discuss at least one institutional and one intellectual reason for the difference. Who pursued science in Europe, the Islamic world, and China, who paid for it, and why did they pursue it?

2. According to M. I. Finley, whose research is summarized in McClellan and Dorn’s textbook, the civilizations of ancient Greece and Rome did not systematically exploit technical innovations. As Lynn White has demonstrated, medieval Europeans radically transformed their societies through the widespread application of new techniques in agriculture and mechanics. What accounts for the difference? Why did the ancient Greeks and Romans pay little attention to the kinds of innovations that medieval Europeans encouraged and adopted? What were the consequences of the technological transformations of the Middle Ages for European societies?

3. Discuss the development of the mechanical clock. What reasons did medieval Europeans have for measuring the passage of time, and what techniques did they use before the invention of the mechanical escapement? Where does the verge-and-foliot escapement come from? What does the history of the mechanical clock reveal about the ways in which technological artifacts develop? Do they involve radical changes or more gradual, evolutionary changes?

4. What motivated Europeans to travel overland and overseas outside of Europe in the High Middle Ages (ca. 1050-1300), the late Middle Ages (c. 1300-1450), and the Age of Discovery (c. 1450-1700)? How was the geographical knowledge they accumulated transmitted to others? What characterized the relations between practical and scholarly geographical knowledge in the Middle Ages? How and why did this relationship change starting in the late fifteenth century?

5. How did the introduction of the striking clock in European towns in the first half of the fourteenth century bring about a change in Europeans’ time-consciousness? How did Europeans measure daytime and nighttime before the striking clock, and how did they communicate the time of important events, like the beginning and end of the working day? In what ways were these habits changed by the striking clock, and what new habits of thought and action replaced them?