# History

# Prelims 2018

# Examiners' Report

**PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION IN HISTORY 2018**

**REPORT OF THE EXAMINERS**

Along with the FHS Examiners' Report, this is a new style Report which concentrates on candidates' performance in the exam, with administrative matters reported separately to the Faculty's Examinations Sub-Committee.

## I: Statistical overview

Table 1: Performance of candidates by gender

| Year | All HIST cands | No + % of Ds, all | No + % of Ps, all | F | No + % of Ds, F | No + % of Ps, F | M | No + % of Ds, M | No + % of Ps, M |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2018 | 215 | 64<br>29.80% | 151<br>70.23% | 114 | 26<br>22.80% | 87<br>76.32% | 101 | 38<br>37.62% | 63<br>62.37% |
| 2017 | 219 | 74<br>33.80% | 145<br>66.21% | 118 | 28<br>23.78% | 90<br>76.28% | 101 | 46<br>45.50% | 55<br>54.45% |
| 2016 | 234 | 87<br>37.18% | 147<br>62.82% | 133 | 38<br>28.57% | 95<br>71.43% | 101 | 49<br>48.51% | 52<br>51.49% |
| 2015 | 225 | 71<br>31.60% | 154<br>38.44% | 107 | 31<br>29.0% | 76<br>71.0% | 118 | 40<br>33.90% | 78<br>66.10% |

Table 2: Number of candidates for each paper in 2018

| Paper | Main School | Joint Schools | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| History of the British Isles I - *c*.300-1100 | 38 | 6 | 44 |
| History of the British Isles II – 1000-1330 | 44 | 6 | 50 |
| History of the British Isles II - (1042-1330) (*Old Regs*) | 1 | - | 1 |
| History of the British Isles III - 1330-1550 | 38 | 3 | 41 |
| History of the British Isles IV – 1500-1700 | 34 | 5 | 39 |

| Paper | Main School | Joint Schools | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| History of the British Isles V – 1688-1848 | 30 | 8 | 38 |
| History of the British Isles VI – 1830-1951 | 30 | 18 | 48 |
| | | | |
| EWH I: 370-900 | 66 | 19 | 85 |
| EWH II: 1000-1300 | 39 | 13 | 52 |
| EWH III: 1400-1650 | 67 | 23 | 90 |
| EWH IV: 1815-1914 | 43 | 29 | 72 |
| | | | |
| OS 1 – Theories of the State (Aristotle, Hobbes, Rousseau, Marx) | 33 | 33 | 66 |
| OS 2 – The Age of Bede, c.660-c.740 (*No takers in 2017-18*) | - | - | - |
| OS 3 – Early Gothic France c.1100-c.1150 | 6 | 3 | 9 |
| OS 4 – Conquest & Frontiers: England & the Celtic Peoples 1150-1220 | 4 | - | 4 |
| OS 5 – English Chivalry & the French War *c*.1330-*c*.1400 | 6 | 1 | 7 |
| OS 6 – Crime and Punishment in England c.1280-c.1450 | 7 | 2 | 9 |
| OS 7 – Nature and Art in the Renaissance | 5 | 2 | 7 |
| OS 8– Witch-craft & Witch-hunting in early modern Europe | 19 | 7 | 26 |
| OS 9 – Making England Protestant 1558-1642 | 7 | 2 | 9 |
| OS 10 – Conquest & Colonization: Spain & America in the 16th Century | 27 | 5 | 32 |
| OS 11 – Revolution and Empire in France 1789-1815 | 25 | 8 | 33 |
| OS 12 – Women, gender and the nation: Britain, 1789-1825 | 6 | 1 | 7 |
| OS 13. The Romance of the People: The Folk Revival from 1760 to 1914 | 5 | - | 5 |
| OS 14 – Haiti and Louisiana: The problem of Revolution in the Age of Slavery | 20 | 8 | 28 |
| OS 15. The New Women in Britain & Ireland, c.1880-1920 | 6 | 1 | 7 |
| OS 16 - The Rise and Crises of European Socialisms: 1881-1921 | 13 | 3 | 16 |

| Paper | Main School | Joint Schools | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| OS 17. 1919: Remaking the World | 13 | 3 | 16 |
| OS 18 – Radicalism in Britain 1965-75 | 6 | 2 | 8 |
| OS 19 – The World of Homer and Hesiod (AMH) | 4 | 3 | 7 |
| OS 20 – Augustan Rome (AMH) | 3 | 7 | 10 |
| OS [21] – Industrialization in Britain & France 1750-1870 | - | 9 | 9 |
| | | | |
| Approaches to History | 110 | 40 | 150 |
| Historiography: Tacitus to Weber | 70 | 19 | 89 |
| Herodotus | - | 1 | 1 |
| Einhard and Asser | 3 | - | 3 |
| Tocqueville | 21 | 6 | 27 |
| Meinecke and Kehr | 2 | 7 | 9 |
| Machiavelli | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Diaz del Moral | 6 | 2 | 8 |
| Trotsky | - | 1 | 1 |
| | | | |
| Quantification | 2 | 8 | 10 |

History of the British Isles (Sex/paper by paper)

| Class | Nos (both sexes) | % | **Men** | | **Women** | | Women as % of total in each class |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Nos | % | Nos | % | |
| D | 56 | 21.46 | 33 | 28.20 | 23 | 15.98 | 41.08 |
| Pass | 205 | 78.54 | 84 | 71.80 | 121 | 84.02 | 59.02 |
| Pass | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Fail | - | - | -- | - | - | - | - |
| Total | 261 | 100 | 117 | 100 | 144 | 100 | - |

European & World History (Sex/paper by paper)

| Class | Nos (both sexes) | % | **Men** | | **Women** | | Women as % of total in each class |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Nos | % | Nos | % | |
| D | 67 | 22.41 | 40 | 25.47 | 27 | 19.02 | 40.30 |
| Pass | 230 | 76.93 | 115 | 73.25 | 115 | 80.98 | 35.20 |
| Pass | 1 | 0.33 | 1 | 0.64 | - | - | - |
| Fail | 1 | 0.33 | 1 | 0.64 | - | - | - |
| Total | 299 | 100 | 157 | 100 | 142 | 100 | - |

Optional Subjects (Sex/paper by paper)

| Class | Nos (both sexes) | % | **Men** | | **Women** | | Women as % of total in each class |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Nos | % | Nos | % | |
| D | 98 | 31.11 | 60 | 36.14 | 38 | 25.50 | 38.78 |
| Pass | 217 | 68.89 | 106 | 63.86 | 111 | 74.50 | 51.15 |
| Pass | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Fail | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Total | 315 | 100 | 166 | 100 | 149 | 100 | - |

Approaches to History (Sex/paper by paper)

| Class | Nos (both sexes) | % | **Men** | | **Women** | | Women as % of total in each class |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Nos | % | Nos | % | |
| D | 29 | 19.33 | 15 | 21,74 | 14 | 17.29 | 48.28 |
| Pass | 121 | 80.67 | 54 | 78.26 | 67 | 82.71 | 55.38 |
| Pass | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Fail | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Total | 150 | 100 | 69 | 100 | 81 | 100 | - |

Historiography (Sex/paper by paper)

| Class | Nos (both sexes) | % | **Men** | | **Women** | | Women as % of total in each class |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Nos | % | Nos | % | |
| D | 30 | 33.70 | 21 | 41.18 | 9 | 23.68 | 30.0 |
| Pass | 59 | 66.30 | 30 | 58.82 | 29 | 76.32 | 49.15 |
| Pass | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Total | 89 | 100 | 51 | 100 | 38 | 100 | - |

## II Marking & Classification

## III Comments on Papers: General

**History of the British Isles I: c. 300-1100**

Forty-four candidates took this paper. There was considerable bunching of choice: three out of twenty questions (on monasticism and conversion, on the Mercian regime, and on Alfred) accounted for half of all answers. Late Romano-British towns, western British Christianity, the making of the Scottish kingdom and the status of women also attracted interest, including some strong answers. Overall, though, performance was disappointing: only three scripts achieved marks of 70 (none higher), and a quarter of all scripts were marked below 60. Something is not quite right about the teaching of this paper, and the multiple appearances of certain crude and over-simplified ideas suggests an answer. Students seem to be relying much too heavily on lectures, which they are often transcribing in an uncritical and (presumably) inaccurate fashion. Tutors need to remind first-year students that while lectures can provide extra support, their reading and thinking for tutorials is the core of their work. This is a worrying trend: towards lower-level learning than an Oxford degree expects.
(J. Blair)

**History of the British Isles II: 1000-1330**

This paper was offered by 44 candidates in the Main School, 5 in History & Politics, and 1 in History and Modern Languages.

In its new incarnation, the paper had been extended backwards slightly, now beginning in 1000 rather than 1042. Several candidates answered the question on saints' cults in the reign of Cnut, some of them with panache; no-one took the opportunity to write about the latter stages of Æthelred's reign.

The only other questions which failed to elicit a single response were those on architecture and on agricultural production. For many years it has been conventional to lament the lack of interest in economic matters, but that in art and architecture is novel, and was also very noticeable on European and World History II. It is greatly to be regretted. The only British intellectual to move anyone to write was Stephen Langton, and that almost entirely on account of his political rather than his intellectual career. Again, the lack of interest in intellectual matters was mirrored in EWH II, and was to be lamented.

The most popular questions were those on Edward the Confessor's reign, and on whether the regime of William I and his sons could be described as colonial. The former was not, on the whole, answered very well. Candidates made conventional points about the crisis of 1051-2, and about the succession question. In neither case did they demonstrate detailed knowledge of the evidence. The crisis of 1065, which is revealing in ways very different from that of 1051-2, was largely ignored in the scripts I marked. It deserved a great deal of attention in an answer to the question set.

In the case of the nature of the Norman regime, candidates tended to spend far too long agonising over what might or might not be the correct definition of colonial, and not enough on the evidence, particularly and most importantly the relationship with Normandy (Maine never being mentioned).

The old chestnut on the relationship between kings and archbishops of Canterbury tended to produce rather lacklustre summaries of the careers of various archbishops. The essay which kept returning to the exemplary relationship between William I and Stephen Langton as a

lodestone deserved a prize for the most egregious howler in any script I read. It deserved a compounded commendation for also discussing Anselm's exile during the reign of Henry II.
The question on Henry II's restoration of the time of his grandfather produced answers which sometime attempted to analyse the reforms in legal procedure (a wise move), but tended to garble the details horribly (a serious mistake). There is no excuse for this, because they are explained with exemplary clarity in the historiography.
The question about the effect on the Norman Conquest on women provoked answers which seemed to be reproducing a lecture, but which had not been enriched by reading the key essays on the subject, which are few in number and of very high calibre. 'Female agency was slowly increasing' is not an adequate summary; indeed, a very powerful argument could be mounted for its being wrong.
The questions on Domesday Book and English historiography were not attempted by many, but the answers produced were impressive. So were many of those on Ireland, Scotland, and Wales: these demonstrated again that this is now, for many candidates, very much a British rather than just an English paper.
The overall impression is that first year historians had enjoyed their engagement with a difficult period quite unlike anything most of them had encountered at school. Although many of them would benefit from reading more source material and indeed more historiography, some of them are producing work of distinction. After nine months this is no mean feat; and the view of both medieval examiners was that the standard of the scripts for this paper was in general noticeably better than those for HBI I.
We have four closing pieces of advice. Never use the verb utilise, which is simply an inelegant synonym for use. Do not see medieval Britain (or indeed any historical time and place) as a blank canvas on which you can paint currently modish concerns: the creation of a parochial structure in medieval England has nothing to do with the 'promotion of diversity', a concept which people in the middle ages would have found incomprehensible. Do not, A level style, keep reverting to the terms of the question at the start of each and every paragraph. And do not write in the historic present, 'In Our Time' style.
(G. Garnett & J. Blair)

**History of the British Isles III: 1330-1550**

This paper was taken by 41 candidates and the standard of work was generally good, while some impressive work at distinction level showed not only wide reading and command of detail but also an ability to think flexibly about the question and fit specific issues into larger contexts. Only three of the twenty questions were not attempted, those on vernacular texts, buildings and power in towns. The most popular questions were those on variations in gender roles (20 takers), diversity in popular religion (20), the role of the upper peasantry in revolt (15), the relationship between victories in France and rule in England (12), parliaments and royal power (9) and whether Wales was a colonial society (9). As always some candidates were not very successful in adapting essays on tutorial topics to answer rather different questions, but this was more of an issue in some areas than others. Material on the causes of revolts, for example, was often, though not always, convincingly adapted to answer this year's question, whereas a number of answers on popular religion merely provided an account of Lollardy. Answers on Wales, Ireland and Scotland and on epidemic disease also shaped their material well to answer the question directly, whereas a number of answers on parliaments, on noble power, or on royal magnificence relied heavily on recounting the politics of Richard II's reign. An inability to use lectures or wider reading to sketch in broader background was a

particular problem on these last two questions, where some candidates could not think of any sources of noble power other than the king's favour and others could find no examples of royal magnificence as conventionally understood other than the Wilton Diptych.
(S Gunn)

**History of the British Isles IV: 1500-1700**

Thirty-nine candidates took the paper - a slight decline from the previous year. Candidates attempted 17 out of the 20 questions - a good spread. Five attracted 10 or more answers: gender norms (q. 1); resistance to the crown (q. 3); the character of the English reformation by 1603 (q. 10); Elizabeth's failure to marry (q. 13); and later Stuart political instability (q. 20). Anglo-centricity remained a significant feature of the scripts: only four candidates attempted q. 15 on Ireland, and the two questions on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Scotland (q's 14 and 17) attracted a combined total of one response. Bearing in mind the considerable recent efforts to enhance the 'British' dimension of the lecture series, this was rather disappointing, though several of the answers to q. 15 on Anglicisation in Ireland were very good. By contrast, the most popular question - q. 10 on the English reformation - received answers of very varying quality. Some candidates appeared to recycle tutorial essays on the Henrician Reformation, whilst others strangely asserted that the Elizabethan Reformation was not 'Protestant' in doctrinal terms. Better answers demonstrated a much more nuanced engagement with the historiography of popular religion in the later sixteenth century. This is the second year in a row that the examiners have commented on undue narrowness of chronological focus in essays on sixteenth-century religious history: hopefully candidates will now take note. Q. 6 - on royal consorts - was generally poorly answered, with several candidates writing essays about royal favourites. This, and the question on Tudor faction, prompted answers more inspired by historical novels - or, indeed, TV programmes - than engagement with scholarly literature. More encouragingly, q. 3 - on resistance to the crown - prompted some very good discussions of Tudor rebellions and political ideas in seventeenth-century England and Scotland. A number of the essays on gender norms were also impressive, though weaker answers were written solely in terms of female identity. There were some good answers on print and politics, even if few candidates engaged with the extensive recent literature on manuscript news culture. Some candidates, seemingly stumped by the absence of a question on the 'causes of the civil war', attempted to rewrite their early Stuart essays for the post-Restoration question (q. 20). Last year's concluding comment bears repetition: 'candidates could certainly afford to engage with historiographical debates more than they are at present'.

**History of the British Isles V: 1688-1848**

The eighteenth century tends to be omitted from school and college curricula, so it was encouraging to see that 38 candidates opted to take this paper. Equally encouraging was the fact that all but two of the 20 questions were attempted. The two ignored by candidates – on gender and the enlightenment and on neo-classicism in the arts – evidently fall outside the normal range of teaching, and it would be good to see more attention paid to intellectual and cultural history in future. The most popular questions were on empire, gender, sexuality, Scotland, and – above all – on radicalism and the Glorious Revolution. Indeed, three quarters of candidates opted to address the question on the latter.

Although many candidates – especially those who opted for the less popular questions – provided clear, precise, and precisely-argued essays; others – particularly some of those who

chose the more obvious topics – tended to offer far more diffuse, inconsequential, and unsubstantiated essays. The Glorious Revolution provoked some especially egregious examples, with the weaker candidates failing to engage with the precise terms of the question and instead writing general – and often very generalized – accounts of the period. The question on popular radicalism likewise resulted in essays which failed to focus on a specific period and omitted any real consideration of what radicalism amounted to. The weaker answers to all questions relied too much on lecture notes and on the regurgitation of old essays. Better focus and better planning would have also have pushed good essays up to distinction level.
(W Whyte)

**History of the British Isles VI: 1830-1951**

The paper set this year was radically different from previous years given the (known) expansion of the time-period and the (last-minute) *Diktat* from examinations committee that there could be only 20 questions on the paper. This means – though presumably the conclusion will not be unwelcome – that the tendency to define this paper in largely thematic terms has become almost irresistible. Without suggesting that the composition of the paper can be reduced to 20 fixed themes, it remains the case that subject areas which can be readily defined in thematic terms can expect (in normal years) one question only, and tutorial teaching will be based on this assumption. So far as examining is concerned, it means that almost all questions will be "asterisk" questions (to use the FHS vocabulary), and there is a question whether the question paper *rubric* should take account of this or not. For example:

> "Except where there is an explicit indication to the contrary, questions may be answered with reference to any part of the period. Candidates should nonetheless demonstrate an understanding of broad developments within the period…"

But this may be pedantic. There is no sign that candidates were distressed by the adjusted format of the paper and they were quite happy to answer with greater or lesser breadth as suited them

The overall standard was respectable and, by inference, no different from previous years. It may be that the expansion of the time-period from 1924 down to 1951 has enhanced the tendency of some candidates to rely on their journalistic instincts rather than scholarship, but the impact of present-day perspectives on quite a wide range of subjects would obtain in any case. The 48 candidates (30 in History) answered all the questions except one (on differing forms of cultural output). Other relatively unpopular questions included English identity (q.3); Britain's relations with Europe (q.2); and the *laissez-faire* character of the state (q.9). The first two run counter to what has just been said about present-day perspectives, and reflect deficiencies in the historiography. On the other hand, the most popular question, by an enormous distance, was on Empire (q.5). More than half (55%) of the candidates answered this, and the conformity of the answers was relentless. Somewhat simplistically, the "Khaki" election of 1900 was taken to be an authoritative popular statement, while the defeat of Tariff Reform in 1906 was airbrushed, and the pro-Boer but white racist South Africa Act of 1909 barely thought of. Question choice is not the only measure of student preference. If one asked what was the most talked about subject across all the answers, then gender would be neck-and-neck with imperialism. The Contagious Diseases Acts were almost as much referred to as parliamentary reform acts, though candidates were sometimes reluctant to mention that a male parliament had repealed them.
(P. Ghosh)

**EWH I: 370-900 (The Transformation of the Ancient World)**
There were 85 candidates across all schools. The spread of final marks was as follows:

80-89: 1

70-79: 21

60-69: 51

50-59: 10

40-49: 0

30-39: 2

All questions were attempted, and it was good to see a large number of candidates tackling questions which encouraged them to combine discreet tutorial topics, to adopt different historiographical approaches, and to range across the geographical and chronological breadth of the paper. Perennial favourites (the fall of the Roman west, the rise of Islam, Charlemagne) were again popular, but some candidates were also able to answer on Sasanian Persia, the Steppe, and T'ang China. The best candidates reflected on the terms of each question (and were not afraid to challenge them), showed an excellent command of detail, sources, and literature, and had a strong comparative element to their answers. Less successful candidates were too prone to generalisation, did not show off knowledge of specific sources or literature, and did not consider or acknowledge the range of possible perspectives on each question. It was disappointing to see some candidates restricting their entire scripts to one particular period and region (often Carolingian Europe), which limited the depth and breadth of answers. But on the whole this was an impressive cohort.
(P. Booth)

**EWH II: 1000-1300 (Medieval Christendom and its Neighbours)**
39 candidates offered this paper in the Main School, 6 in Ancient & Modern History, 4 in History & Modern Languages, 1 in History & English, and 3 in History & Politics.
Questions have long been set for this paper on the Mongols, and therefore by extension on China, but to accommodate the Faculty's recent 'Global Turn' Christendom's neighbours have now been deemed also to include the Abbasid Caliphate (but curiously not, or at least not yet, the Indian sub-continent). Many of this year's other questions (qs. 8, 12, 13, 18, and arguably 2) had been carefully framed in such general terms that they could have been essayed in relation to almost any geographical location. In the event, however, candidates only ventured beyond Europe and the Byzantine Empire (a popular subject (15 answers), about which they were generally well read) when prompted to do so by the questions on the Mongols and the Abbasids.
The standard of the answers on these topics was generally mediocre, probably because there is not much Anglophone historiography, and few sources have been translated into English. The more numerous answers on the Mongols (13) all said much the same things, at much the same Wikipedia-esque level of bland superficiality. For the most part, it seemed that assertion was all that was required; most candidates did not feel obliged to adduce any evidence. The contrast with the Byzantine answers was striking, and wholly to the advantage of the latter.

But then on the Byzantine Empire there is a very substantial and impressive historiography, and many translated sources are available.

An important aspect of the 'Global Turn' is considered to be the study of cultures or civilisations running up against each other. Precisely because this was central to medieval European historiography long before anyone had dreamt up the phrase 'Global Turn', the Iberian Peninsula and Sicily have been standard topics on this paper since its inception. Both have a very extensive historiography, even in English, and many sources have been translated. It is possible for undergraduates to get to grips with difficult issues, at a sophisticated level.

Straightforward questions, partially or exclusively addressing Christian-Muslim relations, were set on both topics. In earlier years they would have attracted many candidates. This year only two candidates attempted the question about Sicily, and one that about Spain. Perhaps most now feel that such matters may or should be considered only in extra-European contexts. By restricting themselves in this way, they also avoid having to engage with the substantial literatures on Iberia and Southern Italy, which afford no easy answers. The tendency towards safe conformism was also obvious in the numerous (27) answers attracted by the (too) straightforward question on heresy. There is now a consensus in the historiography on this subject which makes it very uncontroversial; hence, perhaps, the fact that all answers said much the same thing.

Candidates find this paper hard because it is. The best scripts enterprised the more difficult questions. The best essay in what proved to be the outstanding script of the year was on the science of jurisprudence (attempted by a cheering 4 candidates). There were a surprising number (5) of impressive attempts to evaluate the significance of Boniface VIII in papal history. On the other hand, candidates were completely thrown by a question about Gregory VII and the Investiture Contest which did not focus on his relationship with Henry IV, and wrote about Henry IV regardless. Future candidates should note that Henry IV did not assume the title emperor until crowned as such by his anti-pope. Up to that point he was just a king. The many who decided to write about the making of kings or emperors with respect to the Holy Roman Empire should be reasonably clear about the distinction between *rex Romanorum* and *imperator*. It is not acceptable simply to fudge (or ignore) the distinction, at least if you are not Innocent III. Only one of the many (27) essays on the theological foundations of crusading so much as mentioned a crusading encyclical. An attempt to require candidates to distinguish between the roles of women and men in a fundamental aspect of medieval life, and one in which women played a very full and arguably distinctive role, threw candidates who just wanted to write about female 'agency' (or lack thereof) in the abstract, and who patently knew little – in some cases, nothing – about monasticism.

Art and culture seem to have died the death. No one attempted the question on universities and cathedral schools, or that on the influence of classical authors, or that on art – also ignored on British History II. The demise of medieval art history would be a great tragedy. Iberia and Southern Italy offer rich possibilities for the examination of architectural and artistic syncretism, and Oxford is the home of one of the world's leading authorities on the latter. The question on death, with a very interesting, mainly recent, and easily mastered literature, was also ignored.

There are a few lessons to be learnt. Breadth of reading, in sources as well as historiographical literature, will always pay handsome dividends. Be precise, and pay attention to detail and nuance. Always treat consensus with suspicion. Do not forget that in this period there was a great deal of cultural diversity within Christendom, and on its fluctuating frontiers.

(G Garnett)

**EWH III: 1400-1650 (Renaissance, Recovery and Reform)**

90 candidates took the paper (67 for History and 23 for Joint Schools). The examiners were impressed with the overall quality of the scripts. We found much thoughtful engagement with frameworks of argument, understanding of regional variety, and analysis of appropriate case studies.

Candidates attempted all questions. Five questions attracted fewer than five answers: the growth of towns (q.4); social status (q.5); universities and princely courts (q.7); the social consequences of religious reform (q.14); and the persecution of deviance (q.15). The most popular questions were q. 18 on popular revolts (32 answers), q. 12 on the unity of Protestantism (31 answers), and q. 11 on the late medieval church (25 answers). Of these, only Protestantism was done well, with candidates displaying impressive levels of knowledge of the doctrinal and ecclesiological issues that divided (and united) Protestants, as well as the politico-religious history of the mid-sixteenth century. Answers on the later medieval church and the laity frequently endorsed a surprisingly old-fashioned view of an inadequate and power hungry institution whose critical members were primed to become adherents of Protestantism. Candidates agonised at length about how to define 'popular' in the question on 'popular revolts', and frequently struggled to fit their particular cases studies into a response to this question.

Of the two questions with an extra-European dimension, there were impressively detailed and analytical answers on the 'globalised economy' (q.2), but answers to q. 9, on European encounters with non-European peoples, were written almost exclusively in terms of Iberian interactions in the New World, and from a wearyingly identikit stock of examples. Most candidates addressed the question on humanism and society solely through analysis of elite intellectual activity, although more wide-ranging answers addressed the growth of bureaucracy and diplomacy. The question that discriminated most sharply between candidates was q. 13, on Catholicism after Trent. This evoked some extremely generalised answers, which displayed very little sense of the pre-existing picture, or regional variety. But the better candidates were impressive, using unusual case studies from less well-studied areas, and exploring the divergence between prescription and the implementation of religious reform. Q. 9, on artistic autonomy, also evoked some very vague responses, with candidates paying little attention to specific examples.

**EWH IV: Society, Nation, and Empire 1815-1914**

72 candidates took this paper, and in general there was a good spread of answers, though students seemed less ready to tackle the cultural questions (on art and historicism) and even the more overtly political questions (on nationalism and extra-parliamentary politics) than the more social and economic history questions (on migration, industrialisation, demography, peasants, aristocrats). Religion and feminism were favoured topics. Although there were some excellent papers, as has been noted by other examiners of these outline courses, there was a dispiriting tendency towards answers that were too glib, that rehashed lecture notes uncritically, that failed to engage with historiographical debates,that restated textbook platitudes and generalisations… Many answers were short (three pages long or less), and it is difficult to do justice to any topic in these survey courses if one has not the space to cite evidence, to provide examples, to introduce historians and their competing arguments. Too often the examiner failed to encounter any individual who actually lived in the nineteenth

century, only categories, but one cannot have nationalism without nationalists, or Catholicism without Catholics. Many answers relied too much on assertion with only limited attempts to provide any evidence: for example, more than one answer claimed that imperial ventures were 'very popular' with European populations without providing any measure by which to gauge that popularity. Some answers that did provide evidence that imperialism was popular did not then explain *why* it might have appealed to some groups more than others. In any history question there are implicit 'how' and 'why' sub-questions. If European populations, or parts thereof, supported imperialism then why did it matter to them, and how did they demonstrate this? Some answers seemed rehearsed and did not take precise account of the language of the question. For example, the adverb 'materially' was routinely ignored in answer to question 11 on feminism. Many students followed a similar pattern in constructing their essays: they addressed the specific question asked in a single paragraph, and then offer numerous additional paragraphs on other competing factors. For example, in answer to question 5 on peasant political actions, the examiner was offered one paragraph summarizing relations to lords, then one each on literacy, political parties, economic transformations, religion… Awareness of these other factors is important, but it is also necessary to do justice to the specifics of the precise question.
(D Hopkin)

**Optional Subject 1: Theories of State**

This paper was offered by 33 candidates in the Main School, 25 in History & Politics, 4 in Ancient & Modern History, 2 in History and English, 1 in History and Economics, and 1 in History and Modern Languages.

As usual, most candidates chose to answer questions on particular thinkers, rather than to compare and contrast thinkers. This is on the whole a wise move. But many seemed thrown by the questions on Aristotle, both of which were about fundamental aspects of his philosophy of politics. In particular, they were baffled by q. 2, about how rational that philosophy was. I marked only half the run of scripts, but of those I marked, no-one had thought to approach an answer by considering Aristotle's understanding of rationality. It was not essential to do so in order to write a good answer, but such an approach would certainly have helped. In answer to the first question, on Aristotle's analysis of constitutional change, it was curious how few had any grasp of his mastery of the empirical detail of particular constitutions. On this evidence, Aristotle seemed the least well understood of the four thinkers, even amongst a select band of Ancient and Modernists who produced a clutch of scripts which were distinctly above the average. It was a candidate from another Joint School who alerted me to the fact that Aristotle had 'rejected the Roman concept of *paterfamilias*'.

The question on representation in *Leviathan* attracted more answers than that on natural law. The quality varied, from regrettable assertions that individual 'citizens' covenanted with the sovereign, to sophisticated attempts to elaborate Quentin Skinner's work on the subject by reference not only to the late medieval civilians, but also to the more immediate inspiration of Henry Parker. Very few had fully comprehended Hobbes' use of the artificial person. As ever, those who did best had clearly mastered the text. This paper is that rare thing: one in which virtue really is rewarded.

Those who answered on Rousseau preponderantly did so on civil religion rather than Rousseau's response to earlier thinkers; but those who tackled the latter question produced the most interesting answers.

Only a few brave souls were prepared to chance the question on whether Marx could be categorised as an Enlightenment thinker, but as a self-selecting elite, they tended to do well. The vast majority piled into the question on capitalism and communism, with very varying results. What distinguished the better answers was an ability to explain the dialectical development of capitalism, particularly with respect to the Hegelian background. Candidates were at an advantage with this question if they had read widely in and about Marx's works, and the intellectual context. Many of the poorer candidates patently did not know the prescribed texts.

The comparative questions attracted the usual collection of the desperate, the well prepared, and the courageously intelligent, though in the run of scripts I marked no-one attempted that on the influence on thinkers of institutions of higher education, a potentially rather interesting question.

This is a popular and a demanding paper, from which most candidates clearly derive a great deal of benefit. They do so for two connected reasons: they are grappling with difficult ideas, which are expressed in complicated texts. This is not something they have done at school, and it sets them up well for the rest of the course here.

(G Garnett)

**Approaches to History:**

Instead of the usual complaints from examiners that candidates stuck only to tried and tested questions, it is pleasing to be able to report that this year's Approaches to History scripts revealed a good range of essays. All questions were attempted, and most were taken by more than a handful of candidates. Many of the best performances were from those who chose the more ostensibly challenging or unusual questions. Not least, those candidates avoided the trap of seeking to reproduce older, longer essays. Being forced to think differently resulted in answers which were fresh and often conceptually original.

That said, there was a tendency amongst some candidates – especially those who produced lower quality writing – to pick the most obvious and familiar questions. As a consequence, there was some clumping. Questions on ritual, propaganda, geography and economic development, religion and gender, and secularization proved particularly popular. The best essays responded effectively to the precise terms of the question set and used the questions as an invitation to reflect – reflexively – on both the history of historical writing and the development of the discipline in question. The weakest did neither. Indeed, some showed a real lack of knowledge about the thinkers they cited and in others the key problem was a tendency to write over-generalized accounts which did not address the specific questions set. Instead of focusing on the problem set out by the examiner, students offered regurgitated versions of their term's work or the most superficial (and sometimes inaccurate) accounts of key thinkers on the theme.

This suggest three conclusions for future candidates and one for the faculty as a whole. The first is purely generic: candidates must spend time planning their essays, so that they actually address the question set rather than the one they would like to have been set. The second is similarly unoriginal. Candidates need to ensure that they sustain their argument with detailed evidence. Simply observing that 'historians have argued' or that unnamed 'anthropologists' operate in one way or another will not do. Thirdly, and more particularly, it is clear that some students have not engaged with the core texts of the approach they are studying. The various misapprehensions about Marx's thought offered in some essays are only the most egregious

examples of candidates writing at second hand about the subject. There evidently needs to be more time given over to the precise exploration of texts as well as commentaries on texts. And this suggests a conclusion for the faculty as a whole. It is evident that our best students gain much from this paper and are well able to draw on their other papers to produce good work. Even they, however, sometimes show insecurity in dealing with some of the key thinkers who have shaped the discipline. Weaker candidates struggle with this paper. The time has surely come to review it and to think about the ways in which a more focused – and, perhaps, more explicitly text-based – Approaches course could help lay the foundations for undergraduate study and distinguish it further from Disciplines of History.
(W Whyte)

**Historiography: Tacitus to Weber**

This paper was offered by 70 candidates in the Main School, 7 in Ancient and Modern, 7 in History and Politics, and 3 in History and Modern Languages.

Candidates seemed to have been intimidated by the quotation from Tacitus in q. 1, though they should not have been. A moment's reflection would have revealed that it was quite straightforward. Otherwise questions on individual authors attracted a spread of responses. The other Tacitus question, concerning his interest in frontiers, was on the whole done well, sometimes very well.

The responses on Augustine were very varied. The question concerning whether he owed more to Christian than to pagan historians was not an either/or question, though some candidates attempted to treat it as if it were. Many of them knew little or nothing about earlier pagan historians of Rome, and almost nothing about earlier Christian historians. Eusebius was occasionally mentioned, but it seemed unlikely that anyone had read him, and therefore might understand how and why Augustine was so different. As for the question on the Fall, most candidates needed to pay more attention to free will and providence, which, according to Augustine, expresses itself through the exercise of free will.

Machiavelli was much more popular than either of the preceding writers. Those who knew about anacyclosis – as everyone who affects to understand the Discorsi should – did well; but the vast majority went for the standard question on Machiavelli's hostility to Christianity. The essays on this subject covered the whole range of ability, as did those on whether Gibbon could be understood as a religious historian. That on Gibbon's view of the role of 'immoderate greatness' in the decline and fall of the Empire attracted surprisingly few, despite the emphasis which Gibbon himself had placed on this very issue.

Answers on Macaulay and Ranke tended to be more humdrum and predictable. Those on Weber have been reinvigorated by Peter Ghosh's recent book.

As usual, the comparative questions were on the whole not done as well as those on individual authors. The question on whether historiography has simply improved over time was an open goal. It was therefore disturbing to be informed that historians should be judged by today's standards, deemed to include objectivity, an allegedly recent discovery. Such a response defeats the purpose of the paper, and indeed of the degree.

This is a testing paper, which candidates appear, on the whole, to enjoy. Its greatest strength is the requirement to read substantial, difficult texts, and to attempt to make sense of them. Most have clearly benefited from the exercise, because they have been introduced to new ideas and ways of arguing. It equips them with a conceptual sophistication which stands them in very good stead for the rest of their degree.

(Marking was split between G Tapsell, G Garnett, A Gajda & W Whyte)

Examiners:

Prof J.W. Blair
Prof G. Garnett (Secretary)
Dr A. Gajda
Dr D. Hopkin
Dr G. Tapsell (Chair)
Prof W. Whyte