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ECO 301Y1: The Economic History of Late-Medieval and Early-Modern Europe

Mid Year Test: January 2006

Answer **ONE** of the following **twelve (12)** questions, **while avoiding any questions related to your first term essay. If in doubt, choose another topic.** Your essays should be about 2300 - 2650 words, or about 7-8 pages in typed form, and no more than 10 pages (with about 330 words per page), using double-spacing with 12-point font. Please prepare your answer on a word-processor or a typewriter; or contact me if you cannot do so. Put your **name** (printed), **student number**, **e-mail address**, and the **question number** at the top of the first page or on the title page of your paper. **Underline or capitalize your surname (printed).** **Make sure that you clearly identify the question being answered, providing both the title and the question number.** Note that the topic of your first term essay has been recorded, along with your grade. Please prepare your answer on a word-processor or a typewriter. Handwritten papers must be double-spaced and clearly legible.

The answer submitted must be *uniquely* your own work. Your answer must not be a mere repetition of lecture notes and must show some evidence that you have read some of the recommended texts, books, essays, or articles for this course (on the reading lists for the major topics, especially). Footnotes and bibliographies are not required (but you may supply in-text references; or a brief list of references at the end).

Your take-home exam is due on Wednesday, 18 January 2006, with no extensions permitted. If you do not submit the exam by this date, you must instead do another and more formal term essay, which will be due on **Thursday, 6 April 2006.**

QUESTIONS:

1. Explain the evolution of feudalism, manorialism, and serfdom from Carolingian times to the 15th century; and how these institutions came to be economically and socially related to each other. How did the evolution of these institutions influence the economic development of western and eastern Europe. What regional differences arose between north and south, west and east?
2. Why did serfdom decline and then finally wither away in western Europe, while it subsequently expanded and grew in eastern Europe? How valid are the various demographic, commercial (or other economic) and institutional models in explaining those changes? You may focus, if you wish, either on the decline of serfdom in western, or on its rise in eastern Europe.
3. Explain the relationship between the Open or Common Fields systems of agriculture and manorialism, in northern Europe, and in particular the specific types of agrarian economies in which it was chiefly practised. To what extent did Open/Common field system hinder European agricultural and, in more general terms, economic development?
4. Explain the military, political, social, and especially the economic importance of large domesticated animals in the development of the European economy from the Carolingian era to the early sixteenth century; and explain the advantages that northern Europe gained and exercised in the use of such animals, in comparison with (and over) southern Europe. In particular what particular advantages did medieval England gain from its endowments in livestock: in agriculture, industry, and commerce?

5. Explain the causes, nature, and economic and social consequences of the late-medieval demographic crises. Were they due primarily to *endogenous* factor – i.e., : were they ‘Malthusian’ in nature; or were they due primarily to *exogenous* factors? In your answer try to explain why the late-medieval demographic decline was so widespread and so prolonged – why recovery took so long to be achieved?
6. Did the western European economic experience a genuine ‘Great Depression’ during the later-Middle Ages, something more than a prolonged demographic contraction? Answer the following:
 - a) If so, what were the fundamental causes of that economic contraction or ‘depression’ (or series of cyclical depressions): demographic, institutional (e.g., the state, warfare, and taxation), commercial (disruptions and contractions in international trade), monetary, agrarian?
 - b) If the term ‘depression’ is unjustified, why was the economic contraction so prolonged?
 - c) Did the living standards of the lower classes improve or deteriorate during this era?
 - d) In general, what regions and what social classes experienced economic gains and losses?
7. Compare and contrast the role of demographic and monetary factors in determining both the course of changes in the price level – in terms of inflation and deflation – and also changes in relative prices, in the economy. What were the consequences of those changes in prices (the price level, and relative prices) in influencing more general economic changes?
8. Compare and contrast the changes in the agrarian sectors of at least two of the following regional economies, from ca. 1300 to ca. 1520: England, the Low Countries, Italy, and Spain. In your answer consider the changes in terms of: technology, crops grown and livestock usage, institutions (e.g., enclosures).
9. Discuss the role of the Church in the medieval economy and society, to ca. 1500 CE, in terms of the following: its role as a landowner in agrarian society; its role in influencing secular institutions, in particular territorial governments (kingdoms, principalities, towns, etc.); its role in influencing social attitudes and social norms; its role in the impact of its theology on economics. In general, to what extent was the Church a barrier to economic growth in medieval Europe?
10. What role did mercantile and craft guilds play in urban economic development in later-medieval western Europe: a positive, negative, or mixed role? In your answer, you may wish to consider as well the role of these guilds in determining gender relations and gender distinctions in medieval urban economies.
11. Why were the Italians so predominant in both the commerce and finance of medieval Europe, from the 12th to early 16th centuries: what commercial and financial innovations and institutions did they initiate and develop – and with what economic consequences?
12. To what extent were the South Germans, the Dutch, and the Portuguese ‘peripheral backwaters’ in the medieval European economy who rose to economic prominence during the later Middle Ages? What contributions, how, and why, did each make to the development of the European economy – including technological innovations?