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

Mid Year Test: Wednesday, 9 January 2008

Answer **ONE and only one** of the following **ten** (10) questions, **provided that your choice is totally unrelated to your first term essay**. Note that the topic of your first term essay has been recorded, along with your grade. **If in doubt, choose another topic. Answer the entire question, and do so fully as posed.** 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 11 or 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.**

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 not only the lecture notes (imperative!) but also 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, 16 January 2008, with no extensions permitted. If you do not submit the exam by this date, you must instead do another and more formal term essay (with footnotes and annotated bibliography), which will be due on **Friday, 4 April 2008**.

QUESTIONS: note that all of the first-term A list essay topics are included in these questions

1. Why did Europe, especially western Europe, fail to experience continued population growth after the end of the thirteenth or early fourteenth century? Was the subsequent population decline primarily due to *endogenous* factors that may be regarded as a genuine Malthusian crisis, or was it primarily due to *exogenous* factors? Why was the demographic decline so prolonged?
2. Which were the more important factors in determining long-run ('secular') changes in European price levels – i.e., in the oscillations between inflations and deflations – from the late 13th to the early 16th centuries: 'real' (especially demographic) or monetary factors? In your answer, discuss the major monetary and demographic changes that did occur during these three centuries, and the impact of such price changes upon the evolution of the later-medieval economy.
3. Explain how and why feudalism, manorialism, and serfdom came to be so closely interrelated to each other, both economically and socially, especially in north-western Europe, as these institutions evolved from the Carolingian era (8th - 9th centuries) to the early 14th century. By that time (the late Middle Ages), explain and discuss the following, in general terms:
 - a) how these changes varied regionally across Europe: north, south, and east
 - b) how they had either impeded or influenced economic development, in these regions.
4. Discuss the significance of the Common or Open Field system of peasant agriculture, in northern Europe, from the 13th to the 16th centuries, in terms of the following questions:
 - a) Why was this system or socio-economic institution found almost always only in those regions that had been subjected to feudal manorialism, and serfdom? Why chiefly in the north?

- b) Why do most historians consider this system to have been an impediment to agricultural innovation, agricultural growth, and economic development in general? Are these historians correct in these assumptions?
- c) In England, in particular, what came to replace Open Field agriculture in many regions, especially in the Midlands, from the later 15th century? How and why?
5. Discuss the causes and the consequences – both economic and social – of the decline of serfdom in western Europe, during the later Middle Ages, comparing that decline in at least **two** of the following countries or regions: England, the Low Countries, France, Italy. In your answer, explain also:
- the nature of those regional variations in serfdom in the countries or regions chosen.
 - the validity of the various demographic, commercial, other economic, and institutional models that various historians have employed to explain the decline of western serfdom.
 - the impact that serfdom itself and then its decline had upon these selected regional economies, especially on their agricultural economies.
6. Did the later-medieval western European economy experience, from the early fourteenth to late fifteenth-centuries, a ‘Great Depression’: or at least, a prolonged, sustained economic decline? Answer the following questions, or at least two of them (specifying clearly your choice):
- What roles did demographic, monetary, and socio-political factors, in particular, warfare play in causing or in aggravating this economic decline or ‘depression’?
 - What regional variations in economic development can be found in western Europe during this so-called ‘Great Depression’ era: i.e., which regions lost economic power, and which ones gained?
 - Was the era of the so-called late-medieval ‘Great Depression’ also the Golden Age of the Labourer? Discuss the current debate about changes in real incomes and living standards during the later 14th and 15th centuries.
7. To what extent did mercantile and craft guilds influence the development of urban commerce and urban industry in later medieval western Europe? Choosing one or two major regions, examine the benefits and costs of urban guild and urban government regulations:
- did they impede or foster industrial and commercial development of the regions in which they flourished?
 - were such guilds inherently monopolistic in their policies and practices?
 - were such guilds essentially male-dominated and male-oriented: i.e., what role did women play?
8. The role of the Church in the later medieval economy: did it impede or foster economic growth? In your answer, consider the following issues:
- What impact did Church doctrines and practices have upon the evolution of the European economy, especially in terms of the usury doctrine and the ‘just-price’ doctrine?
 - How did the usury doctrine in particular influence the development of banking and other financial institutions, during the later Middle Ages: in both the realms of private and public finance?
9. Discuss the importance of both wool and of woollen cloth in the later-medieval western European economy: in terms of changes in the agricultural, commercial-financial, and industrial sectors. Who gained and who lost in terms of these wool-based economic changes from ca. 1200 - ca. 1500?
10. Compare and contrast the economic roles – especially in commerce and finance – of three of the following regions in late-medieval Europe (1300 - 1550): Italy, Northern and Baltic Germany, South Germany, the Low Countries, England, Spain and Portugal. Which of the three chosen was or had become the more predominant power in the European economy, by the early 16th century?