Major Field Exam in Modern Europe

The modern Europe major field exam for the M.A. in history is intended to help students gain a broad historical and historiographical knowledge in major trends in European history since 1789. Students who successfully complete this exam should be well qualified to teach courses in later Western Civilization and Modern European History. The events and trends covered in this exam are important cornerstones of modern World Civilization as well.

All history faculty members testing in this field expect students to be able to demonstrate historical fluency in the major events, trends, and changes in European history since the French Revolution. As such, they recommend the following background surveys that span the period under discussion:

- Jonathan Sperber, Revolutionary Europe
- Jonathan Sperber, Europe, 1850-1914
- Richard Vinen, A History in Fragments: Europe in the Twentieth Century or Mark Mazower, Dark Continent
- Tony Judt, Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945

All history faculty members testing in this field also expect students to be able to discuss analytically three of the most important transformations in Europe in the past two centuries: the development of mass politics, nationalism and the democratic nation-state, the spread of industrialization, market economies, and industrial society, and the advent of a new modern aesthetic in art and thought. As such, all students taking this exam will be expected to read the works below:

On mass politics, nationalism, and democracy
- Peter Fritzsche, Germans into Nazis

On industrialization, the market economy, and industrial society
- E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class
- Anna Clark, The Struggle for the Breeches: Gender and the Making of the British Working Class
- Stephen Kotkin, Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as Civilization

On cultural history and aesthetic modernism
- Marshall Berman, All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity
- Carl Schorske, Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture
- Modris Eksteins, Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age

Students taking the modern European history exam will also have an opportunity to explore these themes further and/or to focus on additional themes of personal interest and of major importance in the development of modern Europe. Other themes include (but are not limited to): the French Revolution and Napoleonic Europe; nineteenth-century society, politics, and revolution; European colonialism and imperialism; women’s and gender history in Europe; the world wars; the Russian Revolution and Stalinism; World War I and modern memory; interwar Europe; fascism, World War II, and the Holocaust; postwar reconstruction and memory, and the Cold War. Students taking the modern European history exam will select among these additional themes, and decide upon the accompanying booklist, in consultation with their examining professor.