

Economic History Field Exam: Summer 2023

Choose three of the eight questions below, and write a one-hour essay on each answering the question posed:

1. What are the most important things that students should take away from the study of the largest-scale structure of human economic history?
2. Why did the industrial revolution take place when and where it did, rather than elsewhere or elsewhere – or not at all?
3. What are the principal lessons for how market structures should be managed today that we can glean from the study of the emergence of modern labor and capital markets?
4. Why were the lessons about how to manage big depressions learned during the 1930s and during World War II more than half forgotten by the time that 2008 came around?
5. As of 1880, Friedrich Engels was very confident that the future of the left was to go all-in on the establishment of democratic central economic planning. What was the process by which his successors in Western Europe stepped away from that commitment?
6. As of 1980., “social democracy” was in desperate retreat throughout Western Europe, in spite of the fact that it had over the previous generation it had delivered the best performance for economic growth and distribution ever. Why was social democracy in Western Europe in the late 1970s so vulnerable to the “neoliberal turn”?
7. Even under the Soviet Empire, Eastern European countries had considerable economic policy autonomy. There was a band of such countries that also had enormously strong contacts with the social democratic economies to their west. Why were East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Yugoslavia, unable to draw on more of the lessons of how to attain prosperity that they could’ve learned from their social democratic neighbors?
8. What were the most important factors determining the shape that social democracy took in western Europe, as it established itself in power in the late 1940s and 1950s?