

Diplomatic History
June 2009

INSTRUCTIONS:

Answer FOUR (4) of the following questions.

Write essays on four of the following six questions, referring both to history and historiography. Do not hesitate to “show what you know” especially in terms of the key events and the arguments and evidence used by scholars in the field.

1. What role did diplomacy play in the ultimately successful American war for independence? What conclusions did the first American policy-makers draw about broad organizing principles for U.S. international relations after it was over?
2. Historians have explained nineteenth century U.S. expansion across the North American continent in different ways. Discuss the major scholarly interpretations and provide your own assessment of the best way to understand this phenomenon. Consider, and analyze, such issues as foreign policy and international relations, ideology, race, economic factors, and how they changed over time in the period 1803-1893. Provide specific historical information on changing policies across presidential administrations, and discuss the work of individual historians.
3. Discuss the major interpretations of the War of 1898. What caused the war? What were U.S. aims, short-term and long-term? How have scholars used widely varying research methodologies and theoretical frameworks to come to different conclusions? Which are the most useful, and what areas remain to be explored despite the prolific extant scholarship on the topic?
4. Discuss the decision to use the atomic bomb against Japan: the rationales given, the goals involved, outcomes, controversies, possible alternatives.
5. Why did the wartime alliance between the Soviet Union and the United States turn into a Cold War? Your answer should refer to specific works of scholarship, laying out the disagreements in the historiography, and should invoke broad underlying issues as well as specific incidents. What and who were the most significant actors and events? Were the most important causes structural, historical, economic, or personality-driven, or some mixture of these and other factors?
6. From the 1950s to the 1980s, U.S. policymakers tended to view Latin America as a contested theater in the Cold War. Yet historians have also identified longstanding continuities in U.S. approaches to the region going back to the era of the Monroe Doctrine. Describe the various factors affecting U.S.-Latin American relations from 1950 to 1990, covering major events, and analyzing changing interpretations historians have found most compelling.

Diplomatic History
January 2010

INSTRUCTIONS:

Answer THREE (3) of the following questions.

Please pick three questions from the five below and write essays referring both to history and historiography. Do not hesitate to “show what you know” especially in terms of the arguments and evidence used by scholars in the field. Do not simply list books and summarize them; compose an essay that addresses the question.

1. What were the first foreign policy dilemmas to face the early republic during the presidencies of Washington and Adams? In what ways did their policies represent continuity with pre-revolutionary precedent, and in what ways did they represent a departure? How has understanding of these issues changed over time?
2. Historians have explained nineteenth century U.S. expansion across the North American continent in different ways. Discuss the major scholarly interpretations and provide your own assessment of the best way to understand this phenomenon. Consider, and analyze, such issues as foreign policy and international relations, ideology, race, economic factors, and how they changed over time in the period 1803-1848. Provide specific historical information on changing policies across presidential administrations, and discuss the work of individual historians.
3. Woodrow Wilson is known both as an idealist who sought to promote democracy and self-determination overseas and as the most interventionist president in U.S. history. Address this paradox as you discuss Wilson’s foreign policy, the various interpretations of “Wilsonianism,” and his legacy in the international realm.
4. Why did the “cold peace” between the Soviet Union and the United States turn into a Cold War between 1945 and 1950? Your answer should refer to specific works of scholarship, laying out the disagreements in the historiography, and should invoke broad underlying issues as well as specific incidents. What and who were the most significant actors and events? Were the most important causes structural, historical, economic, or personality-driven, or some mixture of these and other factors?
5. Describe, compare, and contrast U.S. policy towards Vietnam under the Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations, taking into account the principal scholarly debates.