

A Short Guide to the Oral Examination
For Students of Early Modern European History

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In the case of graduate education, my own experience twenty-five years ago contrasted with that of students today illustrates the point nicely. Those of us at Columbia who in the early sixties prepared for oral examinations in modern European history since the Renaissance were expected, whatever our capacity to read works in foreign languages, to familiarize ourselves with the entire English-language corpus of professional historical scholarship in that vast field, which was then assumed to constitute a foundation shared by all modern Europeanists. The task was certainly time-consuming, but it was by no means impossible. There were perhaps five or six books on nineteenth-century France, two or three on eighteenth-century Germany, comparable numbers treating other times, places, and topics. Then, starting in the sixties, came the flood: by the seventies there were approximately as many American academic works on modern European history published each year as there were on the total "backlist" in 1960. The old assumption that a hardworking student should have a comprehensive grasp of the literature of a major field became hopelessly out-of-date.

Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 582n10.

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INTRODUCTION

This guide is meant to give you a basis on which to start planning your reading list for the oral examination. It is a supplement to the long "Guide to the Study of Early Modern European History for Students Preparing their Oral Examination" that I first wrote 1991 and have since then occasionally revised. By now the long guide has increased so much in size that it is no longer an effective tool for working out a list of books to read for your orals. Hence this short guide.

I have divided this guide into two parts.

The **first part** lists books and articles I would actually like you to read. It is divided into two sections. The *first section* consists of about forty-five books and thirty articles of scholarly literature, arranged according to topics. I have aimed at a balance of reliable overviews, unusually important studies, and recent articles introducing you to the state of the field. For each of the topics into which I have divided this section I have arranged books and articles in the order in which I think it would make the most sense to read them.

The *second section* lists about a dozen primary sources—half of them about the length of an article—that strike me as particularly important for grasping the major issues in early modern thinking about the organization of politics, society, and law. I have arranged them in chronological order, because that is the easiest way to recognize what mattered and what changed when.

I believe the books, articles, and sources listed in this first part will give you a decent grasp of the main outlines of early modern European history as well as a sense of the current state of the scholarship, especially in the areas with which I am most familiar. But it is not writ in stone. There are many other ways to reach the same goal, and there are other goals one might set for the oral examination. Every single item on this list is therefore negotiable.

The **second part** of this short guide is supposed to prompt you to consider other books and articles you might be reading instead of the ones I chose to put in the first part. I have divided this part into three sections:

In the first section I have listed books that can really change your mind about some fundamental issues and give you a thoroughly new perspective on the past. These are books that I believe every self-respecting historian ought to read at one time or another. But all of them raise issues going far beyond early modern history and many of them are only indirectly related to early modern history. There are other books you need to read more urgently in order to develop a solid foundation in early modern history. I have therefore not put them on the list of books I actually want you to read for the oral exam.

In the second section I have listed books that serve as standard points of reference in the field because they treat a certain topic in an exemplary manner. That is not to say that all of them are still being regularly consulted. John Allen's 1928 *A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, for example, has long since been superseded by more recent scholarship. It does mean that all of them do something outstandingly well that no other book does equally well. There is no book that does a better job of introducing you to the ways in which early modern political thought used to be studied *before* the more recent scholarship took hold than John Allen's eighty-year old standard. The books in

this section are arranged in an order that is both chronological and topical, proceeding from old studies to more recent ones, and from medieval background to early modern history.

In the third section I have listed books that have been published in the last fifteen years or so. They reflect current trends in the field or they establish a new agenda. Some of them may already be considered standards in the field and therefore appear both in this section and in the preceding one. I have listed these books in reverse chronological order, so that you can see more clearly where we are today and where we were fifteen years ago.

What you do with the books listed in the three sections of this second part is entirely up to you. All of them are very much worth reading. Otherwise I would not have listed them. But art is long and life is short. You have got to begin somewhere, and there is only so much you can do in preparing for your oral examination.

Part one tells you where I think you ought to begin. It's a substantial list, but it's manageable. If you think that's enough, fine. If you want to add something more, that's fine, too. If you want to take something out, that's fine, too. No matter what you decide, let's talk about it.

PART I: WHAT I WOULD LIKE YOU TO READ FOR YOUR EXAM (NEGOTIABLE)

1. Scholarly literature

1.1 Overviews

- Rice, Eugene F., and Anthony Grafton. *The Foundations of Early Modern Europe, 1460-1559*. 2nd ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1994.
- Koenigsberger, H. G., G. L. Mosse, and G. Q. Bowler. *Europe in the Sixteenth Century*. 2nd ed. London: Longman, 1989.
- Rabb, Theodore K. *The Struggle for Stability in Early Modern Europe*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1975.

1.2 Broad perspectives on European history

- Elias, Norbert. *The Civilizing Process*. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. Oxford: Blackwell, 1994.
- Gellner, Ernest. *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983.
- Todorov, Tzvetan. *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*. Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Harper & Row, 1984.
- Wolf, Eric R. *Europe and the People Without History*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982.

1.3 Medieval background

- Bartlett, Robert. *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization, and Cultural Change, 950-1350*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993.
- Moore, R. I. *The First European Revolution, c. 970-1215*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000.
- Freedman, Paul, and Gabrielle Spiegel. "Medievalisms Old and New: The Rediscovery of Alterity in North American Medieval Studies." *American Historical Review* 103 (1998): 677-704.
- Holsinger, Bruce W. "Medieval Studies, Postcolonial Studies, and the Genealogies of Critique." *Speculum* 77 (2002): 1195-227.

1.4 Economy and Society

- Cipolla, Carlo M. *Before the Industrial Revolution: European Society and Economy, 1000-1700*. 3rd ed. London: Routledge, 1993.
- Braudel, Fernand. *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*. 2nd ed. 2 vols. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1975.
- Braudel, Fernand. *Capitalism and Material Life, 1400-1800*. New York: Harper, 1967
- Wunder, Heide. "European Agriculture." In *The Reformation, 1520-1559*, ed. G. R. Elton, 23-47. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Padgett, John F. "Open Elite? Social Mobility, Marriage, and Family in Florence, 1282-1494." *Renaissance Quarterly* 63 (2010): 357-411.
- De Vries, Jan. "The Industrial Revolution and the Industrious Revolution." *Journal of Economic History* 54 (1994): 249-70.
- Wong, R. Bin. "Early Modern Economic History in the Long Run." *Science & Society* 68 (2004): 80-90.

1.5 Popular Culture

- Burke, Peter. *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*. 3rd ed. Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2009.
- Davis, Natalie Ann Zemon. *Society and Culture in Early Modern France: Eight Essays*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1975.
- Ginzburg, Carlo. *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth Century Miller*. Trans. John and Anne Tedeschi. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980.
- Scribner, Robert W. "The Reformation, Popular Magic, and the 'Disenchantment of the World'." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 23 (1993): 475-94.
- Strauss, Gerald. "The Dilemma of Popular History." *Past & Present* 132 (1991): 130-49.
- Beik, William. "The Dilemma of Popular History." *Past & Present* 141 (1993): 207-15.
- Strauss, Gerald. "The Dilemma of Popular History: Reply." *Past & Present* 141 (1993): 215-219.

1.6 Humanism and the Renaissance

- Nauert, Charles G., Jr. *Humanism and the Culture of Renaissance Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Burckhardt, Jacob. *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*. Trans. Samuel George Chetwynd Middlemore. New York: Macmillan, 1890.
- Kristeller, Paul Oskar. *Renaissance Thought, 1: The Classic, Scholastic, and Humanist Strains*. New York: Harper & Row, 1961.
- Baron, Hans. *The Crisis of the Italian Renaissance: Civic Humanism and Republican Liberty in an Age of Classicism and Tyranny*. 2nd ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966.
- Grafton, Anthony. *Defenders of the Text: The Traditions of Scholarship in an Age of Science, 1450-1800*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991.
- Schiffman, Zachary, ed. *Humanism and the Renaissance*. Problems in European Civilization, ed. Merry E. Wiesner. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002.
- Monfasani, John. "The Renaissance as the Concluding Phase of the Middle Ages." *Bulletino dell'Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo* 108 (2006): 165-85.
- Jurdjevic, Mark. "Hedgehogs and Foxes: The Present and Future of Italian Renaissance Intellectual History." *Past & Present* 195 (2007): 241-68.

1.7 Protestant Reformation

- Cameron, Euan. *The European Reformation*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.

- Febvre, Lucien. "The Origins of the French Reformation: A Badly-Put Question?" In *A New Kind of History and Other Essays*, by Lucien Febvre, ed. Peter Burke, 44-107. New York, 1973.
- Moeller, Bernd. *Imperial Cities and the Reformation*. Trans. H. C. Erik Midelfort & Mark U. Edwards, Jr. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972.
- Oberman, Heiko A. *Luther: Man between God and the Devil*. Trans. Eileen Walliser-Schwarzbart. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.
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- Duggan, Lawrence G. "The Unresponsiveness of the Late Medieval Church: A Reconsideration." *Sixteenth Century Journal* 9 (1978): 3-26.
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- Watt, Jeffrey R., ed. *The Long Reformation*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006.
- Scott, Tom. "The Reformation between Deconstruction and Reconstruction: Reflections on Recent Writings on the German Reformation." *German History* 26 (2008): 406-22.
- Fasolt, Constantin. "Hegel's Ghost: Europe, the Reformation, and the Middle Ages." *Viator* 39 (2008): 345-86.

1.8 Catholic Reformation and Counter-Reformation

- Bireley, Robert. *The Refashioning of Catholicism, 1450-1700: A Reassessment of the Counter Reformation*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999.
- Evennett, H. Outram. *The Spirit of the Counter Reformation*. Ed. John Bossy. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1970.
- Bossy, John. *Christianity in the West, 1400-1700*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- John Bossy, "The Counter-Reformation and the People of Catholic Europe," *Past and Present* 47 (1970): 51-70
- Bossy, John. "The Mass as a Social Institution, 1200-1700." *Past and Present* 100 (1983): 29-61.
- O'Malley, John W. *Trent and All That: Renaming Catholicism in the Early Modern Era*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000.
- MacCulloch, Diarmaid, Mary Laven, and Eamon Duffy. "Recent Trends in the Study of Christianity in Sixteenth-Century Europe." *Renaissance Quarterly* 59 (2006): 697-731.
- Gregory, Brad S. "The Other Confessional History: On Secular Bias in the Study of Religion." *History and Theory, Theme Issue* 45 (2006): 132-49.

1.9 Political Thought

- Skinner, Quentin. *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*. 2 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978.
- Pocock, J. G. A. *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975.
- Pocock, J. G. A. *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law: A Study of English Historical Thought in the Seventeenth Century*. Revised ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
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- Nederman, Cary J. "Empire and the Historiography of European Political Thought: Marsiglio of Padua, Nicholas of Cusa, and the Medieval/Modern Divide." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 66 (2005): 1-15.

1.10 Scientific Revolution and Printing

- Shapin, Steven. *The Scientific Revolution*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Dear, Peter Robert. *Revolutionizing the Sciences: European Knowledge and its Ambitions, 1500-1700*. 2nd ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
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- Smith, Pamela. "Science on the Move: Recent Trends in the History of Early Modern Science." *Renaissance Quarterly* 72 (2009): 345-75.

1.11 Diplomacy and Military History

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- Cipolla, Carlo M. *Guns, Sails and Empires: Technological Innovation and the Early Phases of European Expansion, 1400-1700*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1965.
- Parker, Geoffrey. *The Military Revolution: Military Innovation and the Rise of the West, 1500-1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- Parker, Geoffrey. *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road, 1567-1659*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972.

1.12 Historiography and Theory of History

- Bentley, Michael. *Modern Historiography: An Introduction*. London: Routledge, 1999.
- Spiegel, Gabrielle M., ed. *Practicing History: New Directions in Historical Writing after the Linguistic Turn*. New York: Routledge, 2005.
- Brett, Annabel S., and James Tully, eds. *Rethinking the Foundations of Modern Political Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Peirce, Leslie. "Changing Perceptions of the Ottoman Empire: The Early Centuries." *Mediterranean Historical Review* 19 (2004): 6-28.

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- Alberti, Leon Battista. "On the Family." In *The Renaissance*, ed. Eric Cochrane and Julius Kirshner, 78-104. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.
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- Dillenberger, John, ed. *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings*. New York: Doubleday, 1961.
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- Höpfl, Harro, ed. *Luther and Calvin on Secular Authority*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
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- "Vindiciae contra Tyrannos." In *Early Modern Europe: Crisis of Authority*, ed. Eric Cochrane, Charles M. Gray, and Mark A. Kishlansky, trans. Constantin Fasolt, 103-37. University of Chicago Readings in Western Civilization, vol. 6. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.
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- Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. Ed. Edwin Curley. Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 1994.
- Locke, John. *A Letter Concerning Toleration*. Ed. James Tully. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983.

PART II: OTHER BOOKS YOU MIGHT LIKE TO READ FOR ONE REASON OR ANOTHER

1. Books that can really change your mind

- Whitehead, A. N. *Science and the Modern World*. New York: Macmillan, 1925.
- Winch, Peter. *The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy*. London: Routledge & Paul, 1958.
- Kuhn, Thomas S. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970.
- Feyerabend, Paul. *Against Method*. Revised ed. London: Verso, 1988.
- Tugendhat, Ernst. *Self-consciousness and Self-determination*. Trans. Paul Stern. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1986.
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- Foucault, M. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Pantheon Books, 1977.
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- Barracrough, Geoffrey. *Papal Provisions: Aspects of Church History, Constitutional, Legal, and Administrative in the Later Middle Ages*. Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1935.
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- Abel, Wilhelm. *Agricultural Fluctuations in Europe from the Thirteenth to the Twentieth centuries*. Trans. Olive Ordish. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980.

2. Standards in the field

- Ranke, Leopold von. *History of the Reformation in Germany*. Trans. Sarah Austin. London: Routledge, 1905.
- Huizinga, Johan. *The Waning of the Middle Ages*. London: E. Arnold & Co., 1924.
- Weber, Max. *The City*. Trans. and edited by Don Martindale and Gertrud Neuwirth. New York: Free Press, 1958.
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- Tellenbach, Gerd. *Church, State and Christian Society at the Time of the Investiture Controversy*. Trans. Ralph F. Bennett. London: Basil Blackwell & Mott, 1959.
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- Berman, Harold J. *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition*. Cambridge/Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983.
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- Delumeau, Jean. *Catholicism between Luther and Voltaire: A New View of the Counter-Reformation*. London: Burns & Oates, 1977.
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- Levack, Brian P. *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*. 3rd ed. Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2006.
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- Sabeau, David Warren. *Power in the Blood: Popular Culture and Village Discourse in Early Modern Germany*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Bainton, Roland H. *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*. New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1950.
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- Gregory, Brad S. *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999.

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