

Essay Questions for the Second Exam: *Transformations of Medieval Society*

Wednesday **November 10, 2010** – in class (50 mins)

DON'T FORGET YOUR BLUE BOOKS!!

For this exam answer ONE of TWO questions chosen from the possible FIVE listed below. As you prepare keep the following in mind:

- a.) Be sure that your essay has a clear thesis and follows a coherent line of argumentation.
- b.) End your essay with a conclusion that summarizes your argument.
- c.) Evidence for your answers should be drawn from the Making of the West textbook, lecture, discussion, and the outside texts and articles assigned for the course thus far. Good essays will employ a variety of these sources.
- d.) Be sure to avoid sweeping generalizations. The best answers are those grounded in precise language and detail (yes that means dates!).

** You may bring to the exam outlines, notes, thoughts, quotations, dates, names, and whatever else you may need to compose your essay – but all of this information must fit on THIS SHEET OF PAPER (front and back). Because you have ample time to prepare your answers in advance I expect your essay to be well-organized and detailed. You must bring this piece of paper with you to the exam and turn it in with your blue book(s). Any exams without this page will not be graded. (A good answer will be at least 4 single-spaced pages in a blue book.) **

Possible Questions:

1. “From the end of the Roman Empire until the twelfth century Europe experienced a period of economic stagnation, political fragmentation and cultural decline that can appropriately be characterized as a Dark Age in the west.”

Respond to the statement above and explicitly address the three components (economic, political and cultural) mentioned. In what ways is the statement false and in what ways is it true? Be sure to make specific reference to Michael McCormick’s argument and what he means by “new light” on a Dark Age.

2. What was at stake in the Investiture Controversy? Be specific! Why was it such a powerful and divisive issue in the eleventh century?

3. What were the objectives and results of the Christian crusades to the Holy Land? Be sure to address the origins of the crusade idea and its impact upon the political and economic life of Europe.

4. “The writings of Heloise and Abelard are emblematic of the new intellectual culture of the twelfth century. It is in Heloise’s writing in particular that we see the rise of a new feminist spirit during this period.”

Analyze the statement above.

5. Identify the factors that contributed to the rise of universities during the thirteenth century and discuss how the curriculum (course requirements) responded to three major concerns at the heart of medieval life.