

Ideas and Interests in the Emergence of European Democracy

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Take Home Exam

The purpose of the take home exam is to induce a bit of thinking about some of the main themes of the course. It attempts to determine whether you understand the key concepts and tools used during the course, and also whether you can use the tools to go a bit beyond the lectures.

You have one week to complete the exam. It is due by the end of class on July 25. Grades will be based on the accuracy and depth of understanding demonstrated in your answers. It will take a few hours to answer the exam questions completely, but it should not take more than half a day. Your entire exam should be about four A4 pages in length.

The exams should be e-mailed to my "gmu" e-mail address by the end of class next week in pdf or doc format. Your e-note should include "constitutional history exam" in the header.

Questions

I. Differences between the Social Science and Historical approaches to the past (20 points, three paragraphs, possibly one diagram)

History can be analyzed in two ways. One method attempts to explain every observed event as a consequences of particular choices and circumstances. The other attempts to distinguish between what is general and what is specific, focusing most attention on the former.

- (i) Discuss the role of causality in these two different approaches to historical analysis.
- (ii) Discuss the role of rational decision making in these two approaches to historical analysis.
- (iii) If individuals are rational, but only partly informed, can history be deterministic? Why or why not.

II. The Continuum between Democracy and Dictatorship (25 points, three paragraphs, one or two diagrams)

In the king and council form of government, there are a number of ways in which policy making power can be divided up. (i) Explain why parliament might be "granted" veto power over taxation. (ii) Explain why this power can be granted without cost in "static" circumstances, but may have a substantial cost in "dynamic" circumstances. (iii) Explain how changing circumstances or changes in the kings interests may allow a parliament to gain substantial power in the long run without civil war or threats of revolution.

III. Choosing Members of Parliament (25 points, three paragraphs, one or two diagrams)

Parliaments are nearly always representative in the sense that the persons in parliament represent political and economic interests that are separate from the King's. (i) Discuss electoral and non-electoral methods that have been used in the past to select members of parliament. (ii) Explain why election laws may be very stable in the long run, even though they have no constitutional protections. (iii) Explain briefly two or three mechanisms through which suffrage law might be reformed peacefully. Illustrate (i) and (ii) with examples from history.

IV. Industrialization and Democracy: A Coincidence? (30 points, four or five paragraphs)

For most of recorded history, the most common form of government has been dominated by single men or women, e. g. dictatorships. Suddenly in the eighteenth and nineteenth century a dozen countries became democracies. (i) Summarize the theory of peaceful transformation developed in class. (ii) Briefly discuss two case histories that seem to fit the theory. (iii) Briefly discuss one case history that does not. (Be sure to include references beyond the class notes.)

