

Preview of the Final Exam
History 466
European Diplomatic History since 1815

The final exam will consist of five parts: 1) chronology; 2) people; 3) alliances; 4) short answer questions; 5) triads. Think of the first four parts as testing essentially factual knowledge, while the fifth part tests your ability to analyze. Accordingly you will write directly on the exam itself in the case of the first four parts; for the fifth part I ask that you have paper on hand (use a blue-book if you wish, but loose paper is also fine). Be sure to have several pens as well.

The exam will cover material from the entire semester—that is, from 1815 to the present. Much of the exam will involve elements of choice, and I will therefore expect truly excellent (that is, stellar) performance on those parts of the exam that you select.

In terms of preparation, you should use everything at your disposal. The postings on the web site are of course very useful, though admittedly the chronologies there are far more detailed than anything I would expect you to master. Past quizzes also should give you a good handle on the kinds of questions and issues that could appear on the exam or that might be addressed in the triads that you write. You should focus in particular on those questions that you answered incorrectly. Even geography quizzes are worth reviewing, as some questions will surely depend on knowledge acquired in that context. Beyond this, you need to draw on the deep reservoirs of knowledge that you have established over the semester by reading carefully, taking notes, and underlining text. As your instructor, I am of course happy to provide advice on specific dimensions of your preparation.

PART ONE: CHRONOLOGY (probably 12 points). This part of the exam is designed to ensure that you have a good grasp of the sequence of events with regard to a particular process in diplomatic history. I will not ask you to know any exact dates, but rather to place a series of events in the proper order. Each group will consist only of four events (rather than five, as was sometimes the case on the content quizzes). There will be an element of choice.

PART TWO: PEOPLE (probably 13 points). This part of the exam will replicate a segment on the last content quiz, whereby you were asked to connect the names of important figures to brief descriptions of their historical significance. There will be a limited element of choice.

PART THREE: ALLIANCES & BLOCS (probably 10 points). This part of the exam requires you to indicate which states belonged to particular alliances, blocs, and/or alignments. The focus here will be on the more important alliances. In the case of large organizations like NATO and the Warsaw Pact, you will of course not be asked to name all the states that were members, but you should have a good handle on those countries that belonged to those blocs and be able to name some of them in particular contexts. Reviewing your geography quiz might be worthwhile in this regard. There will be an element of choice.

PART FOUR: SHORT ANSWER (probably 25 points). In most cases you should be able to answer these questions with a single word or short phrase. Be sure that you read these questions carefully and provide the information requested. There will be an element of choice.

PART FIVE: TRIADS (probably 40 points). This is the major interpretive part of the exam. As you are already aware, a triad is a list of three items (people, places, ideas, events, or abstract concepts) that can be linked in the context of the history we have studied. For the exam, I ask that you write two essays, each addressing a triad from the list below.

The Trivial Triads™ address issues and problems somewhat more limited in time and space (they are “trivial” only in comparison to the “tremendous” triads). Your essay in this case is worth a maximum of 15 points and should, at a minimum, take the form of a very solid and substantive paragraph. For most people this would be a full page of handwritten text, although length will vary depending on your skill, verbosity, and aspiration to impress. The Tremendous Triads™ are more wide-ranging and require the incorporation of material from throughout the course (that is, the last 200 years). Your essay in this case should be longer, since presumably more argumentation and evidence will be needed to justify the grand thesis that you offer in your thesis statement. It will be worth up to 25 points. Depending on handwriting, an essay of 2-3 pages would seem appropriate in this case, though some students may find that more exposition is needed to make the case that they wish to make. In both cases, consider the triad essays the opportunity to demonstrate the depth, scope, and intensity of your knowledge of and engagement with the diplomatic history of Europe since 1815. Aspire to have your essays say something important and revealing about that history, even if you are drawing primarily on the ideas of others. In grading essays, I *award* points rather than “taking points off.” That is, you start with zero and gain points as the scope, depth, and intelligence of your essay are revealed.

In writing your triads, you should articulate clearly the historical relationship among the three items. The idea is to focus above all on *the connections*, rather than addressing each item in isolation from the others: How are the items *related* to one another? In some cases the relationship will be causal (that is, some items caused the others). In some cases, one item may be a context in which the other two items occurred. In still other cases, one item may be an issue over which two people or states disagreed. And so on. In each case, *the best answer will state in the paragraph's first sentence the relationship involved*; the rest of the essay will then elaborate on that relationship, *using specific evidence and detail from the materials* at your disposal. Though the three concepts can usually be put together in a variety of ways, make sure that you do not ignore important evidence in assembling your answer. Many triads on exams in the past have been striking for their failure to make reference to specific events, treaties, alliances, institutions, and people. This part of the exam is your opportunity to demonstrate the depth of your knowledge and the sophistication of your thought.

Of the triads presented below, a smaller number will appear on the exam itself, and you will choose two of these on which to write—one from among the Trivial Triads™ and one from among the Tremendous Triads™. I would recommend giving some thought to all of the triads, for in doing so you will be preparing for the exam more generally. At the same time, you might focus on perhaps three of them on the assumption that at least one of them will appear on the exam itself and you will therefore be able to write about it with considerable confidence.

On the exam, I will ask you to write the three elements of each triad at the top of the page, so it is clear to me which one you are answering. Remember that I have to read a ton of these triads in a very short time. Clarity, organization, and legibility will therefore be at a

premium in your answer. Think strategically – ahead of time – about how exactly to go about answering each triad. Think hard about the kinds of examples you can use to support your main thesis in each triad-essay. Be sure to return to your notes and reading to make sure that you have considered all available evidence.

Trivial Triads™
(One @ 15 points)

Russia Concert of Europe Ideological distance	Austria-Hungary The international system World War I	Germany Alliances Outbreak of World War I
Fourteen Points Treaty of Brest-Litovsk Germany	Sino-Soviet split Détente Germanies (GDR & FRG)	Munich crisis Appeasement USSR
League of Nations French security Treaty of Versailles	League of Nations United Nations Imperialism	NATO USSR German Reunification

Tremendous Triads™
(One @ 25 points)

Vienna Settlement of 1815 World Wars I & II Cold War	Concert of Europe League of Nations European Union	Prussia / Germany World War I Cold War
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