ORAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR FINAL EXAM

World History I

Answer ONE of the following questions orally in class, giving a 5-6 sentence summary of your answer to the question, telling why you chose the one you did (20 points).

1. Considering that the use of tools and speech and our inborn sociability were practices and traits responsible for the growth of the human brain, explain how and why these same fundamental abilities still promote personal and cultural success in today’s world.

2. The study of World History reveals many characteristics shared by all human beings. Since human origins we have seen that, completely independent of each other in different areas of the world, people developed some of the same institutions, patterns of life, products, and even ideas. These examples of independent development provide considerable evidence for the unity of the human family. Describe 3 examples of how independent development occurred and how it reflects the unity of humankind.

3. One-celled bacteria have a protective membrane which is a defense mechanism for that cell, and every living creature has defense mechanisms. Given this unmistakable fact of nature, name and describe 5 human defense mechanisms, either individual or societal, and analyze whether these defense mechanisms need to change or if you think they are suitable.

4. Warfare arose in history at the beginning of civilization and has been fought with increasingly lethal weapons for 5,000 years. Cite 3 examples of conditions which encouraged warfare from the rise of civilization to 1500 CE, and tell whether you think violent warfare is inevitable or whether you think it will eventually be abolished. If it disappears, who will make that happen and through what processes?

5. Peacemaking is evident in certain primates and has been part of human existence since the origins of our species. Cite 3 aspects to peacemaking in all of the civilizations, and reveal the reasons why you think peace on earth will eventually be possible, or whether you think warfare and violence are inevitable.

6. Ancestor worship was an early and very widespread belief across cultures and time, especially in Africa, Asia, and the Roman Empire. Early peoples must have found it meaningful. Cite 4-5 reasons why ancestor worship was and still is meaningful for so many human beings.

7. Spiritual beliefs have played a vital part in human societies from the Hunters and Gatherers to 1500 A.D. Whether nature worship, ancestor worship, Hinduism, Buddhism, Shinto, Judaism, Christianity, or Islam, these beliefs have framed people’s lives and provided the basis for their worldview. Can you imagine a society without any religious basis? Do you think science (or psychology) are replacing traditional religions as ways for people to think about the world and structure their beliefs? Or do you think religion and spirituality are so basic that
human beings literally cannot live without them? Provide at least 3 reasons for your answer. **DEFINITIONS: SPIRITUALITY** is the human response to the harmony and beauty of the world around us. It is respect for what is greater than ourselves and awareness of being part of a universal order. It also consists of respect for life, for the mystery of life, and for the supernatural as it is revealed to us in many ways. **RELIGION:** Sacred books, doctrines, sacraments, rituals, temples, and ethical codes of an organized religion.)

8. Buddha, Jesus, and Muhammad were reformers who advocated for peace, equality, and respect for women, minorities, the poor, orphaned, and sick. In their times they preached visionary beliefs, but, in the aftermath of their lives, old discriminations persisted and their descendants were unable to sustain their original vision. Why, ultimately, despite their best intentions and higher standards, did their attempts fail with people lapsing back into old patterns of patriarchy, discrimination, and wars?

9. In most Asian cultures the individual is subordinated to the group. Asian people aim to create harmony in the group by submerging their own ego and trying to please others. Asians tend to extend hospitality to others, give gifts often, praise others, and genuinely enjoy helping others. In contrast, Western Europeans have a heritage of individualism where there's an emphasis on each person's individual characteristics, and each person's individual talents. Do you think the Asian emphasis on the group is a good way to live or do you think the Judeo-Christian emphasis on the individual is a better way to live?

10. What were the steps to environmental degradation evident in all areas of the world which began in the Neolithic Era and continued in all of the world’s civilizations until 1500 CE and beyond?

11. Do you think identity politics, where people identify with a certain race, ethnicity, or gender will continue to be prominent, or do you think cosmopolitanism, a feeling of being part of all humankind, living and dead, and a feeling of universal concern and respect for other people, will take hold? Cite at least 3 reasons for your answer. (Read “Reflections on Cosmopolitanism” on my website to learn more about cosmopolitanism and read Wikipedia: “Identity politics” before making up your mind.)

12. There has been tangible moral progress in human history with breakthroughs such as the abolition of slavery, women’s right to vote, public education, more and more democratic countries, the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the creation of the UN and its charter, and the fact that 73 countries have abolished the death penalty. Given this record for moral progress, cite 3 further advances we could build on from here.

13. Now that you have studied World History I, has your view of human nature changed? If your view has changed, explain how it has changed citing at least 3 characteristics which you think are an integral part of human nature. If your view has not changed, explain what your view of human nature was and still is.