One of the following essay questions will be on the mid-term examination (worth eighty points):

1. What factors enabled the Spanish to conquer the Aztec and Inca empires? What roles did misunderstanding and chance play in the conquests of the Aztecs and Incas? What role did European consumers play in the rise of the American plantation system and the ways in which the Europeans controlled the lives of ordinary people living there after the conquest?

2. One can make an argument that European states (countries, nations) were much weaker and less advanced than the governments of the Ottoman Empire, Mughal India, and Ming China during the sixteenth century (1500s). Would you agree with this? Why or why not? Why was isolation more common in these empires than overseas engagement, and what were some of the benefits and drawbacks of isolation?

3. Why was the European “Scientific Revolution” of the period c. 1500-1750 revolutionary? (Another way of asking this question is: In what respects did the “Scientific Revolution” represent a “fundamental change” in European thought?) Support your answer with specific examples of scientists (Copernicus, Brahe, Kepler, Galileo, Bacon, Descartes, Newton) and their discoveries and provide explanations of their significance.
4. How did the rise of European slavery affect the lives, societies, and cultures of people in West (Benin, Songhay Empire, etc.) and Central Africa (Kongo/Angola), Saint Domingue/Haiti, the southern part of the United States, and Brazil? Be sure to give specific examples. How did Europeans justify slavery? What factors led to its abolition?

5. Compare and contrast the outcomes of the American and French Revolutions, and the Latin American Independence movements. In which ones did governments become more inclusive? How do you account for the differences in outcomes? Why were specific groups of people—slaves, mixed races, Blacks, poor people, women—included or excluded in the various movements and revolutions? Why was there so much bloodshed in the various efforts to achieve political and social change? In terms of your answer, which revolutions were most/least successful?