ECO 2210Y

**Topics in the Economic and Social History of Later Medieval Europe, 1260 - 1600**

**Topic 7: The Expansion of Serfdom in Eastern Europe, 14th - 17th Centuries**


QUESTIONS:

1. Why did serfdom increase, expand its extent, in eastern Europe while it was dying out as an institution in western Europe? Explain the regional variations in the spread of serfdom in eastern Europe, from the 14th to 17th centuries in East Prussia, Poland, Lithuania, Russia, Hungary, etc. Is there any common explanation for the spread of serfdom?

2. Discuss the Brenner thesis:
   a) how valid and valuable are demographic, commercial or market models in explaining the expansion of serfdom in the East?
   b) What is the relevance of institutional factors, especially feudal and state or monarchical institutions in this debate?
   c) Can institutional factors alone explain the fundamental reasons for the expansion of serfdom in eastern Europe; or do economic and other social factors also have to enter into any essentially institutional model, i.e. as a catalytic agents? How well does Brenner handle this problem?

3. Discuss the arguments presented by the opponents of the Brenner thesis: who is the more or most convincing?