Final Exam Essay (Q1)

The last Muslim kingdom in the Iberian Peninsula, Granada, fell to the Christians in 1492. The end of Muslim power in the peninsula signaled the historical end of the **Reconquest,** but the notion of “reclaiming” Spain from Muslims and other outsiders lingers to the present day. Moreover, the legacy of the Reconquest presented obstacles to Spain’s modernization. Notably, it reinforced the notion of reversed influence, and it led to the eventual expulsion of Jews and Muslims from Spain.

After the fall of Granada, many Muslims chose to remain in Spain under Christian rule. Though Muslims were initially granted religious freedom, the **Catholic Monarchs** were soon persuaded to enforce mass conversions. Moreover, Isabella and Ferdinand founded the Spanish inquisition which persecuted suspected “false Christians”. Notably, **Jews** and **Muslims** who converted to Christianity (commonly to avoid persecution) were known as **conversos** and **moriscos**. These groups were the initial target of the inquisition, but it also targeted protestants to preserve the power of the establishment—**old Christians** in the Catholic church.

Any Jews who refused to convert to Catholicism were expelled from Castille just 3 months after the fall of Granada. Though the Catholic Monarchs were able to forcefully introduce religious unity and centralize power, the expulsion of the Jews banished some of Spain’s most productive economic and scholarly citizens. Positions of power were reserved for old Christians, so new Christians (especially conversos) were forced to obfuscate their origin. This entrenched a sense of paranoia in Spanish society where everyone was suspected of being Jewish. The lasting legacy of both the moriscos and conversos is reversed influence—the idea that being Spanish meant that you were markedly *not* Muslim and *not* Jewish. For the following centuries, this xenophobia would hinder economic and academic advancement in Spain. The subsequent reigns of Charles I (1516-1556) and Phillip II (1556-1598) preserved this isolationist mindset while advancing Spain to be a European superpower.

Charles I, son of Juana and Philip of Habsburg, began the Habsburg dynasty in Spain. One of his first acts was annihilating the Comuneros uprising at the battle of Villalar in 1521. This battle signified the end of the ideology in Spain where cities and regions held a large proportion of power. In an attempt to rekindle the universal medieval empire, Charles I would entangle Spain in foreign conflicts against Protestants and the Ottomans. In 1556, Charles I abdicated, and his son Phillip II took the throne.

Phillip II inherited his father’s conflicts, and England emerged as a new threat by supporting Protestants in the Netherlands. Moreover, Phillip II ruthlessly suppressed the morisco uprising (1568-1571) which challenged Spanish unity. Later, Phillip II would have to deal with the revolt of the Netherlands, and the failed invasion of England would invigorate Spain to rebuild and modernize its navy. The notable success of the latter part of Phillip II’s reign was the annexation of Portugal and its colonies.

By 1600, the Spanish-Portuguese Empire had spread throughout Africa, Europe, Asia, and the Americas. In spite of their trade monopoly with the New World, relatively little wealth remained in Spain. One explanation is that Spain was forced to finance the many foreign conflicts perpetuated by Charles I and Phillip II. Another explanation is that Spaniards associated mercantilism with Jews and conversos. Due to reversed influence, Spaniards avoided these productive economic activities. Through conquest, colonization, and a myriad of successes and failures in foreign conflicts, Spain emerged as a European superpower during the reigns of Charles I and Phillip II. However, the emerging problems of depopulation, constants wars, overexpansion, and economic hardship foreshadowed Spain’s decline in the coming centuries.

Phillip III succeeded his father in 1598, and he began the practice of appointing validos to rule. In 1604 and 1609, Phillip III signed peace treaties with the English and Dutch. Though his foreign policy may have been successful, his government suffered from financial crises, corruption, and depopulation. Moreover, the moriscos were deported in mass from 1609-1614. Similar to the expulsion of the Jews, religious unity in Spain was achieved at a high cost. At a time when Spain was suffering from depopulation and financial hardship, the expulsion of moriscos deprived the nation of ~300,000 productive citizens. The outbreak of the Thirty Years’ War in 1618 exacerbated Spain’s mounting internal problems, and they would reach crisis levels under the reign of Phillip IV.

Philip IV appointed the Count-Duke of Olivares as the new valido. The Count-Duke’s plan aimed to concentrate Philip IV’s power and mold the Spanish economy into a system that emulated the success of the English and Dutch. Though Olivares’ policies were initially successful, crises throughout 1627-1631 depleted Spain’s labor, land, and forestry reserves. International conflicts resulted in naval defeats against the Dutch, the independence of Portugal, and the internal rebellion and French occupation of Catalonia. Numerous colonial concessions and military defeats between 1630-1659 culminated with the Treaty of Pyrenees which recognized France as the new European superpower. The later stages of Philip IV’s reign mark the beginning of **Spain’s decline** and **French hegemony** in Europe.

Charles II succeeded Phillip IV in 1665. The king was both mentally and physically ill, and his frailness was perceived as a parallel to the vulnerability of Spain. The reasons for Spain’s decline include religious intolerance, endless wars, continuous bankruptcies, sharp declines in population (worsened by the expulsion of Jews and Muslims), plagues, and isolationism. Charles II had no children, and this meant that both the Austrias and Bourbons had legitimate claims to the Spanish throne. Charles II ultimately chose a Bourbon, Philip V of Anjou, as his successor. England, Austria, and the Netherlands refuted his choice, thus starting the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1713).

Following the war, Philip V would begin the **Bourbon dynasty** in Spain which abolished the fueros of Aragon and Catalonia. Similar to France, his government aimed to centralize power, and it enforced the doctrine of a single official language and law. Moreover, the civil and economic distinction between Castille and other regions of Spain was abolished under the Nueva Planta. These changes enabled more land to be cultivated, and it eliminated internal trade barriers. Though the Bourbons were able to bolster Spain’s economic recovery, culturally distinct regions such as Catalonia resented the centralization of power.

Many reforms implemented by the Bourbons were in line with the backdrop of the 18th century **Enlightenment**. This revolutionary ideological movement questioned superstition, promoted reason, challenged established social orders, and attempted to improve the human experience with science and progress. However, the Bourbons were reformist, *not* revolutionary, and their rule is best characterized as **Enlightened Despotism**. This form of government implemented some Enlightened reforms, but it attempted to maintain the established power structure of an absolute monarchy. Examples of improvements include roads, bridges, canals, and the resurgence of Spain’s population and navy. The Bourbon administration also emulated French bureaucracy by appointing specialized ministers, but people with Enlightened ideas in Spain were best described as an active, vocal minority.

Unsurprisingly, a power struggle between the liberal, Enlightened new hidalgos and the **conservatism** of the old Spanish nobility emerged. In parallel to the Enlightenment challenging the religious doctrine of the **Catholic Church**, liberals challenged private privilege and the authority of the Church and Jesuit order. In contrast, the conservative nobility was heavily influenced by the Jesuit order, and they leveraged family connections extensively. Enlightened ideas faced particularly strong opposition in Spain due to their association with France. Consequently, progressive ideas were often considered a threat to the Spanish identity of being Catholic and *not* French. In this way, the reversed influence of the French and rooted conservatism in Spain served as barriers to the nation’s modernization.

Charles III (1759-1788) perpetuated the Enlightened despot rule of the Bourbons. Under his direction, Madrid was transformed into a modern city, and public works were prioritized over churches for the first time. However, internal problems such as the high cost of bread and the overreach of interior administrators led to the 1766 Squillace riots. Though this was resolved with improvement in the food supply and retraction of traditional dress restrictions, it strengthened the growth of **nationalist** attitudes in Spain. Specifically, it underscored the reverse influence of the French. Nationalism also reduced the social **marginality** of low and marginal classes including people from Andalusia, outlaws, bordellos, and **gypsies—**a marginal group originally from India. This decrease in marginality occurred because the aristocracy and commoners held a mutual antipathy for anything connected to the French.

This shared nationalist attitude manifested itself through many cultural avenues. Songs denouncing the French and **afrancesados** (francophiles) were popularized. Spanish aristocracy adopted the majo style rather than French style of attire. Even though Charles III banned **bullfighting** (except for charity), it grew in popularity. It was during the mid-18th century that the modern view of bullfighting—strict rules, a bullfighter on foot, and a bullring—emerged. **Flamenco**, a song and dance tradition originally associated with gypsies and other marginal groups also emerged during the 18th century. The growth of these cultural facets furthered a common nationalist attitude throughout Spain. Consequently, this reduced the social marginality of lower social groups who propagated nationalist culture.

The growth of these cultural traditions in the 18th century created a **new Spanish stereotype** which differed greatly with the perception of Spain in the 16-17th centuries. **The old Spanish stereotype** was that Spaniards were proud, fanatically religious, sober, distant, courageous but cruel soldiers, and lazy. In contrast, the new Spanish stereotype was that Spaniards were the antithesis of the French. In this way, a “typical” Spaniard became associated with marginal groups and the barbarism (from the perspective of other European nations) of bullfighting.

In comparison to his predecessor, Charles IV (1788-1808) was known for his political incompetence. Manuel Godoy, his valido, attempted to modernize Spain. However, Godoy was despised by most Spaniards even before he signed the 1806 treaty with Napoleonic France to partition Portugal. France invaded Portugal in 1807 with the support of Spain, but their troops did not leave Spain after the invasion. Their occupation marked the beginning of the **Napoleonic invasion** of Spain. Consequently, Charles IV passed on the crown to his son, and Godoy was arrested as a traitor to Spain.

The Spanish Bourbons abdicated, and they were moved to France. Jose Bonaparte, the older brother of Napoleon, was crowned king of Spain. The majority of Spaniards resented Bonaparte as a foreigner, and this was heightened by the surge of nationalist attitude during Charles III’s reign. Moreover, the fact that the king of *Catholic* Spain was the brother of the excommunicated Napoleon drew the ire of many Spaniards. This resulted in the organization of local military Juntas, and the central Junta based in Seville assumed control of the national government. This central Junta was responsible for organizing and funding the war effort, and it was brimming with conservative, nationalist, and anti-French sentiment.

The **war of Independence** began in 1808 with an uprising in Madrid. After a Spanish victory at Bailen, Napoleon responded with heavy reinforcements from France. In 1808, Madrid fell to Napoleon, and the central Junta fled to Seville. The guerilla fighting was fierce and brutal, and much of the horrors of war were captured by Goya. By 1811, Napoleon controlled Spain, though ineffectively. King Jose I wanted to modernize the country in line with Enlightened ideas. However, the association of these ideas with the French occupation stymied any support from Spaniards. Guerilla warfare continued over the following years, but with British and Portuguese support, the French were ousted from Spain by 1813.

The War of Independence entrenched the association between Enlightenment ideas and France. This made it difficult to modernize the country as liberals in the 19th century would be associated with afrancesados. In addition, it firmly established the national identity of Spain with its common and marginal people rather than its aristocracy. Low-class people actually fought the invaders whereas some members of the elite supported the invasion as an opportunity to modernize the country. Consequently, the new Spanish stereotypes that developed under Charles III transformed into an image of **Romantic Spain.** In this sense Spain was associated with passion, lack of control, fiestas and siestas, gypsies, flamenco, bullfighting, and bandits. By rejecting Enlightened ideas and being associated with marginal groups, Spaniards were seen through a lens of **primitivism—**their behavior unaffected by reason, and belief in the value of unsophisticated culture. Overall, the War of Independence and the subsequent political swings ingrained an inability to modernize throughout Spain.