**Historical Periodization**

Periodization is the attempt to categorize Universal History or divide time into certain periods. The origin of periodization is very old and first be came part of the Western tradition in the myths of Ancient Greece and The Bible. The result is a descriptive abstraction that provides a useful handle on periods of time with relatively stable characteristics. However, determining the precise beginning and ending to any "period" is often a matter of debate.

History is continuous and ungeneralizable, and all systems of periodization are more or less arbitrary. Yet without named periods, however clumsy or imprecise, past time would be nothing more than scattered events without a framework to help us understand them. Nations, cultures, families, and even individuals, each with their different remembered histories, are constantly engaged in imposing overlapping, often unsystematized, schemes of temporal periodization; periodizing labels are continually challenged and redefined. One historian may write a new history of the Renaissance in Europe; another may claim that there was no such thing as the European Renaissance.

Not only will periodizing blocks inevitably overlap. Some of these usages will also be geographically specific. Is it possible to use the term "Victorian" outside of Britain? It sometimes is used when it is thought that its connotations usefully describe the politics, culture and economic conditions characteristic of the last two-thirds of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless periodizing terms often have negative or positive connotations that may affect their usage. This includes *Victorian*, which often negatively suggests sexual repression and class conflict. Other labels such as *Renaissance* have strongly positive characteristics.

There is a gradual change in the courses taught and books published to correspond to the change in period nomenclature, which in part reflects differences between social history and cultural history. The new nomenclature suggests a broader geographical coverage and a growing attention to the relationships between Europe and the wider world. The timeframe is also slightly different. Most professional historians (defined as paying members of organizations devoted to the propagation of history in higher education, like the American Historical Association) now refer to the historical periods commonly known as the Renaissance and the Reformation as “the Early Modern Period”.

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