Trends in Early Modern Historiography
I do:

• Popular politics, especially the social history of citizenship
• Urbanism and urbanization
• Intoxicants and intoxication
• The social history of language (i.e. words) and concepts (i.e. semantics)
• Reading literary texts in their historical contexts
Current Projects:

An Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) project on ‘Intoxicants and Early Modernity’ with V&A

Today –

• General points re: historiography since WW2

• Trends in Political, Social, and Cultural History

• Some organizational and technological changes
General historiographical trends –

• Modern academic history is a subject very much within the social sciences and arts and humanities and trends in methods and modes of analysis are usually closely linked to changes in these disciplines more generally.

• Early modern history is, in turn, often in the vanguard of trends and developments.
General historiographical trends –

What we’ve seen since the end of WW2 is the breakdown of the two major sub-disciplines that formed with the professionalization of the subject in the 1860s – political (constitutional) and economic (institutional) history.
General historiographical trends

• Precipitated by three major ‘turns’ –

• the sociological turn of the 1960s and 1970s
• the linguistic or cultural turn of the 1970s and 1980s
• the material turn of the 2000s
General historiographical trends –

These have led to the emergence of other sub-disciplines –

• social history (including gender history)
• cultural history
• political history more broadly defined
General historiographical trends –

These have been accompanied by a major re-orientation in terms of the geography of study.

• From the 1960s local history – using micro-historical approaches to understand larger macro processes, was dominant

• After 1989 global history – in terms of colonial and imperial developments by the west and the comparison of different societies on a global scale
POLITICAL HISTORY

• Revisionism: localism, institutionalism, biography, events;
• Geo-political perspectives: localism, Three Kingdoms, global (colonial/imperial), European;
• Post-revisionism: representation and opinion, the ‘public sphere’
Revisionism opposed –

• teleology
• anachronism
• sloppy causation (what economists call ‘correlates’)
• printed evidence (which was inherently unreliable)
• Reaction to social history
Revisionism espoused –

• the reconstruction of how institutions ‘worked’ (and so determined action)
• the ‘reality’ of personal connections and motivations
• the power of contingency
• archival and scribal evidence (which was ‘true’)

Cumulatively –

the past should be understood on its own terms rather than according to ‘modern’ paradigms and assumptions
SOCIAL HISTORY

• Demographic and family history
• Communities and social relations
• Subaltern history
• Gender history
• State formation and popular politics
• Economic culture, material culture (the material and spatial ‘turns’)
North West European Marriage Pattern –

• The English, like north west Europeans more generally, tended to marry late (in late 20s)
• they formed independent ‘nuclear’ households
• that broader demographic trends were dictated by nuptial rates rather than changes in mortality
CULTURAL HISTORY

• Religious history
• Contextual histories of political thought
• Literary history and the history of language
• Material culture and the history of consumption
• The return of production (rediscovery of economic history)
General Trends –

• from institutional minutiae and empiricism to semantics, meanings, rituals, and vocabularies
• the integration of previously marginal sub-disciplines into the mainstream
• an accentuated concern for experiences and identities
General trends –

• an interest in the production, transmission, reception, and appropriation of ideas and things
• an expansive geo-political agenda
• a more complicated sense of the importance of power