

COMPREHENSIVE PORTFOLIO AND EXAMINATION

Eligibility

The Comprehensive Examination is taken after a student has fulfilled all coursework requirements except for Advanced Research and Study hours, and Dissertation hours. Students must register for at least one credit of Advanced Research and Study in the semester they sit for the Oral examination.

Coverage

The Comprehensive Examination requires the production of a portfolio and an oral exam related to its contents. Each of the elements of the portfolio are described in detail below. These parts should represent the culmination of work over a period of time in different courses as well as independent work completed specifically in preparation for the examination.

Portfolio

The Portfolio consists of five sections: a five to seven page Introduction, five substantial questions based on your areas of study (two should be comparative in nature), a ten to fifteen page review essay discussing seven to ten texts accompanied by an annotated bibliography of every remaining item from your book list, a 25-35 page article/writing sample that demonstrates significant promise of making a contribution to the scholar's field, and two course syllabi.

Introduction: The Introduction to the Portfolio is designed to provide a five to seven page overview of the materials that follow, showing the relations among them. Because the Introduction represents the candidate's own sense of the interconnections among the various parts of the Portfolio, it does not require prior approval by the faculty members serving on the candidate's committee, although the candidate is free to seek their advice while drafting the Introduction.

Area Questions: The primary list should consist of 65 to 85 texts, and the secondary list should consist of 30 to 40 texts. As a way of coming to terms with the fundamental issues animating the student's fields, the candidate should formulate five broadly conceived questions written in consultation with the Chair (or faculty who is a primary area specialist) and the faculty member who is a secondary area specialist. The Chair must formally approve all questions before they are included in the portfolio.

Review Essay and Annotated Bibliography: The book list is examined via a ten to fifteen page review essay, which delineates the candidate's understanding of their areas of interest through key primary and/or secondary texts. The essay should examine seven to ten texts from the reading list that the candidate considers foundational to their thinking and explain. Each one of the remaining texts from the list should be annotated separately in a full paragraph (250-300 words), following standard bibliographic form (i.e., citing author, title, and publication information for each item). The purpose of the review essay is to allow the candidate to articulate important issues or patterns linking the texts on the list. It should result in a working document that might be the basis for future investigations, including the dissertation. The purpose of the annotated bibliography is to provide a detailed synopsis of texts that can then be referred to in writing the dissertation or in preparing for job interviews. The list, review essay, and annotated bibliography are written by the candidate in consultation with the Chair and should be approved by the committee prior to sitting for the exam. The Chair will report to the Program Director when all committee members have approved these elements of the portfolio.

Article/Writing Sample: An article or writing sample that demonstrates significant promise of making a contribution to the scholar's field should also be included. It should be approximately twenty-five to thirty-five pages. It should follow an acceptable format (e.g., MLA or Chicago) for citation of sources. The article or writing sample may represent new work, but more often develops out of a paper originally written for a course and subsequently revised under the guidance of the Committee Chair, who is usually the faculty member for whom the paper was first written. With the help of comments and advice offered by the committee during the oral exam, the candidate should plan to submit a revised version of the article to a scholarly journal for consideration; or, especially in the case of students in the CSP track, if further fieldwork/data collection needs to be conducted prior to publication, specific plans for what needs to be completed in order for the writing sample to become a publishable article should be articulated by the committee in consultation with the student during the oral defense. Ideally, the article/writing sample should form the basis of the student's dissertation, though this is not required. The goal of the article/writing sample is to produce a document that, in the judgment of the committee, is likely to lead to publication. Such a determination should be made by the full committee prior to sitting for the exam, and the committee's approval of the article/writing sample having met such criteria should be reported to the Program Director by the Chair prior to scheduling the exam.

Syllabi (and Optional Alternate Exercises): The candidate will complete two syllabi that demonstrate an ability to present a coherent selection of works to an undergraduate and graduate audience. At a minimum, all syllabi should include: course title, course description with explicit goals, list of required texts, brief descriptions of assignments, grading scheme with weights of assignments, and reading schedule. Subject to the approval of the student's committee and the Program Director, the candidate can produce an alternate exercise that demonstrates his or her ability to organize and present a coherent selection of works drawn from the list to a specified audience. Examples might include a proposal for a website, anthology, or museum exhibit.

Goals of the Portfolio: Your goal is a portfolio that demonstrates both a broad range of interests and a mastery of knowledge.

Organization of the Portfolio In order to help your committee locate items in your Portfolio, it is useful to paginate continuously and to provide a Table of Contents at the beginning. In most cases, the Portfolio should have its items assembled in this order: • Title page • Table of contents • Introduction • List (signed by Chair) • Exam Questions • Syllabi • Review essay • Annotated bibliography • Article (signed by Chair)

ORAL EXAM

The Portfolio should be given to the Comprehensive Examination Committee at least two weeks before the two-hour oral exam. Because the exam begins with the reading list, the Chair directs the exam. Once the committee is assembled, the student leaves the room while members share their views on the quality of the Portfolio and the questions they would most like to ask the student. Then the student is called back into the room for the exam. Fifty minutes of the oral examination will be set aside to examine the student's mastery of the relationships between the texts on the list. Another fifty minutes will be dedicated to review the Portfolio's additional sections. Although each examiner may raise questions about any portion of the Portfolio and reading lists, the committee will start the exam by asking the candidate to respond to one of the five prepared questions about the list; thereafter, any of the remaining four questions, as well as all the items on the Historical Period list and the proposed

survey course, are open for discussion. Finally, the discussion of the Article could productively lead to advice on publication. Students are strongly advised not to read from notes during the oral exam. At the conclusion of the oral examination, the student leaves the room while committee members evaluate that student's performance. Members prepare a report on the exam for the Director of the Program by voting "satisfactory," "reservations," or "unsatisfactory." The committee then calls the student back into the room to convey the results of the vote. A vote of 'Reservations' should only be used when a faculty member feels that the deficiencies displayed by the student were modest and can be readily rectified. In the event of a report with two or more votes of 'Reservations,' the actions required of the student, by the committee, that are necessary to correct the deficiencies must be recorded and submitted to the Program Director with the examination report form. Copies of the written statement of necessary actions should be kept by: the Chair, the Program Director, and the student. The statement must specify the time allowed for completion of the aforementioned actions. The language describing the actions must be specific. For instance, if the introductory essay is deficient, a specific list of what is needed in order to rectify it is required. If the student failed to articulate the connections between the texts on their list in a satisfactory manner, the committee should notify the student of specific areas in which they demonstrated weakness and how they might go about addressing this. If the balance of the committee feels that the candidate satisfies the required actions in the specified period of time, the Chair will notify the Program Director that the examining committee considers the actions to have been satisfied. The Program Director will then record the exam as being 'Satisfactory' as of that date. If the actions are not satisfied on time, or if the actions are not of sufficient quality, the Program Director will be notified by the Chair. In such a case, the comprehensive exam will be recorded as 'Unsatisfactory' as of that date. Upon such a result, the student will be asked to retake the oral exam within a timeframe selected by the committee in consultation with the student, but no later than the end of the following semester (excluding summer). Only one retake will be allowed; if the second oral exam is unsatisfactory, this is grounds for dismissal from the Program. Retakes will not be administered during the summer. If the outcome of the exams is grounds for dismissal, the program director will notify the student and the Graduate College of this recommendation. The student may appeal the process following the procedures set by the Provost (see graduate student dismissal policy on Provost website). The candidate will not be admitted to the final oral examination of the dissertation until a grade of 'Satisfactory' has been recorded for the comprehensive exam.

The Committee

The Comprehensive Examination committee consists of at least three tenure-track faculty members, one of whom must be tenured faculty. At least one faculty member with expertise in each area should be present on the committee.