

## **COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION**

The Comprehensive Examination is to be taken when Ph.D. coursework is complete and may be taken in a semester when final requirements are being completed. In order to file for candidacy, all requirements, including language requirements, must already have been completed.

### **CE is based on:**

1. A reading list comprising 3-4 areas compiled by students in consultation with their committee and the graduate advisor, which will form the basis for future teaching and research.
2. Demonstration of knowledge of the contexts and the relevant traditions (especially major critical literature and approaches) involved.

### **CE will:**

1. Ascertain whether students possess the breadth of knowledge (outside the dissertation specialization) appropriate to a beginning assistant professor in an academic department.
2. Assess whether students have sufficient general knowledge of the chosen scholarly field to be able to develop a prospectus and write a dissertation.
3. Evaluate whether students have the breadth and depth of knowledge to participate in professional discussions, both in Comparative Literature and in a single national literature.

### **Committee:**

1. 4 or 5 members of students' choosing in consultation with the graduate adviser or with the potential dissertation supervisor.
2. Usually are (but do not have to be) part of the dissertation committee
3. Supervisor *must* be a member of the Comparative Literature GSC.
4. Please note that the Graduate School requires that at least 3 members of the *dissertation committee* be members of the Comparative Literature GSC. Students should consider this requirement when choosing their CE committee members.

### **To schedule:**

1. Submit the "Comprehensive Examination Committee Form" (in CL office) with the signature of the committee supervisor to the Graduate Coordinator at least two weeks prior to the examination.
2. Submit a copy of the reading list to the Graduate Coordinator at least two weeks before the examination.

3. Ask the Graduate Coordinator to reserve a room for the exam after the approval/signature of the Graduate Adviser and the supervisor have been obtained.
4. Email a reminder to each committee member of the date, time, and location of the examination.

### **Reading Lists and Professional Profiles**

Students must compile the reading list in consultation with their chosen committee and secure their supervisor's approval for the list *at least one month* before the examination. Students then must circulate to the committee the final version of the reading list at least two weeks before the examination.

When assembling the examination reading list, students should identify at least three areas of literary study that together will constitute a viable professional profile for a beginning assistant professor.

Area criteria:

1. May each involve one or more languages
2. Must *together* represent works (both primary and secondary) drawn from at least *three different languages* selected by the student.

First area reading list:

1. Should be drawn from a single national literature whose broad contours students are expected to know (it will correspond to the expectations of an academic department in which the student might be able to fill a faculty position).
2. May be shaped so as to reflect the student's areas of concentration or special interests within the literature, but must still remain fairly wide in scope.
3. Is expected to have at least 40 titles (may have more depending on the genres and periods represented). Students are expected to prepare appropriate secondary scholarship for this list.

Two additional areas' reading lists:

1. Must be comparative in nature.
2. They may include texts drawn from any of the student's three languages.
3. Must include those languages not represented in the first list.
4. May involve both theoretical and literary texts and may focus on a period, genre, or theme.
5. Must remain independent (although the two lists may be related or complementary).
6. Are often representative of a particular genre or problem that cuts across more than one national literature.

Students are encouraged to consider presenting a *fourth area* on the examination, either a field within literary theory, or an extra-literary discipline (e.g., art history, musicology, folklore, cultural anthropology, linguistics). **THE FOURTH AREA MAY NOT SUBSTITUTE FOR THE SECOND OR THIRD AREA, WITHOUT THE APPROVAL OF BOTH THE COMMITTEE SUPERVISOR AND THE GRADUATE ADVISER.** If a fourth area is

presented, the size and composition of the other three areas may be adjusted to compensate for the additional effort and preparation.

### **The Relationship between Areas and Languages**

1. An area of literary study may involve one or more languages. Students are responsible for developing a reading list comprising 3-4 areas, each of which covers an area of scholarly inquiry. Students are also responsible for ensuring that works *in the original* are included from *at least three different languages*.
2. The minimum total number of texts for the reading list is 100 texts. Although this number may be adjusted to reflect the areas chosen, the lists should include a balance of texts drawn from among students' three languages.
3. The three languages represented on the list may include the student's native language. Students may elect to include critical and theoretical texts in the original, but the expectation is that all primary texts will be included only in the original.

### **Format and Evaluation of the Examination**

The Comprehensive Examination is an approximately 2 hour oral exam conducted by student's committees and usually begins with a short statement by the student explaining the coherence of the reading list.

The CE Committee will:

1. Assess students as potential junior colleagues.
2. Look for evidence of student's abilities to discuss fundamental issues in literary and critical traditions, since such ability will qualify students to enter the critical debates of chosen specialties.

Examples of examiners' criteria:

1. Does the student have a solid command of the historical and literary-historical circumstances affecting her or his areas of study?
2. Does the student understand how theory and theoretical discussions affect these histories or construct alternative critical discourses?
3. Can the student state, exemplify, and defend a critical position adequately (even if that position is at odds with that of the examiner)?
4. Can the student establish thematic or morphological bridges between national literatures?
5. Can the student document and analyze affinities, correspondences, or direct influences?
6. Is the student able to refer accurately and with understanding to the texts studied?
7. Does the student speak of his or her fields in a spirit of keen and unprejudiced scholarly inquiry?

Students should expect to move beyond the list, to discuss it in the context of those texts with which a specialist in a national literature should be familiar. The ultimate goal of this examination is to assess whether students have sufficient general knowledge of the chosen

scholarly field so as to be able to advance to the next stage, the development of a prospectus and the writing of a dissertation. Like an academic job interview, the examination assesses the student's achievements and forecasts future scholarly work and intellectual promise.

The Committee Supervisor should report the outcome of the examination on the Comprehensive Examination Results form to the Graduate Coordinator. Usual results are "pass with distinction," "pass," "fail, with recommendations," "fail."