

PREPARING FOR THE DOCTORAL EXAMINATIONS

--1. Identify a primary research area and a secondary area. Find three faculty members to serve on your committee—two for your primary area and one for your secondary area. (approximately 12 months before you plan to take the exams)

--2. With your examiners begin to put together a reading list (during the summer before you take the exams).

Primary area list should consist of approximately 75-100 texts, primary and secondary, canonical and less-canonical, in a recognizable field, in most cases a field found in the MLA Job Information List. A portion of the list should identify a theoretical/methodological area, historicist perspective, or interdisciplinary field.

Secondary area list will consist of about 30 texts that focus on an area distinct from the research field. The list will have a general orientation toward the texts and scholarly resources important to developing a range of undergraduate courses in a recognizable/marketable area in an historical period or in an interdisciplinary or nontraditional genre or method.

--3. During the summer and fall preceding your exams, you'll need to draft a rationale that defines and explains your two areas (marking borders of nation, time, genre etc.). The rationale will also map out some of the very broad lines of inquiry and questions that will guide your reading. The rationale should be 2-3 pages long.

--4. Students completing their course work in the fall must submit their exam rationale and their working reading lists, *signed by the chair of their exam committee*, to the Graduate Committee by the first week of November. Students completing their course work in the spring must submit their exam rationale and their reading lists to the Graduate Committee by the first week of April.

--5. After the rationale and working lists are approved by the Graduate Committee, you can then work with your committee to finalize your reading lists.

--6. Early in the semester in which you are to take your exams, Carol will contact you and ask you to indicate formally when you will be taking your exams. Carol will actually schedule the exams with you and your committee members.

Guidelines for writing the rationale for the Ph.D. exam

The rationale for the Ph.D. exam, which you should write in consultation with your three advisors, consists of two parts.

In the first part, you will explain how you have defined your primary research area. In approximately two to three double-spaced pages, you will need to do the following.

--1) You should demarcate the field of primary texts you will be reading, identifying the relevant geographical, chronological and generic boundaries you have established.

--2) If you are creating an unconventional field, you will need to define its relation to those conventional fields that still by and large structure our discipline and form the basis for most job advertisements (e.g. Medieval, Early American, Postcolonial). If your list focuses substantially on non-canonical works, you should also indicate the canonical texts you will be reading, and which will enable you to place yourself on the job-market.

--3) You should make clear what you hope to learn from this particular configuration of texts - and what questions you will be asking. Your thinking should be exploratory, posing hypotheses rather than asserting fixed arguments, asking questions rather than providing preconceived answers. You do *not* need to formulate a coherent argument in your rationale.

--4) You should explain the theoretical, critical and/or historical texts you plan to include, indicating how these texts in particular will help you to structure the field and to answer the questions that interest you.

--5) Attach to your rationale a draft of your full reading list of 75-100 texts (and we recognize this list might change).

The second part of the rationale will map out your secondary area and it should be approximately 1-2 pages, double-spaced. Here you need to say what field you plan to study and why; whether it is entirely separate from or in dialogue with your research area; how you feel it completes your profile as a teacher. Please include your reading list of approximately 35 texts.