

Instructions for Examiners (M.A. Exams in Comparative Literature)

In CWL (Comparative and World Literature), our students take an exam at the end of their second year in order to be considered for admission to Stage Two of the Ph.D.. **Exams are always taken in the first week of March.** The examining committee consists of three faculty members; each one writes one part of the exam, but all members of the committee read, grade and comment on all parts of the exam, to the best of their ability. Exams are graded **high pass, pass, low pass, or fail.** We ask that the committee come to a consensus, if at all possible, for each portion of the exam.

Your exact duties will be a bit different depending on which portion of the exam you've agreed to do. The three parts of the exam are:

1. A **critical theory exam** based on materials covered in CWL 501-502 and the student's area of specialization, covering several different critical approaches (4 hours in length). The reading list consists of 20 works divided into 4 categories, selected in consultation with the examiner. The exam consists of 3-4 essay questions covering various aspects of the reading list. The student chooses only two questions and answers them in a coherent essay of no less than five double-spaced pages each (2 hours per question).
2. A period exam in the **major literature** (4 hours in length), based on a reading list of 20-25 works. The exam consists of two parts. First, two or three essay questions on any aspects of the reading list. The student chooses only one question and answers it in a coherent essay of no less than five double-spaced pages (2 hours). Second, a passage in the *original language*, chosen by the examiner from any single work on the reading list, which the student explicates in no less than four double-spaced pages. The passage can be in the form of a short poem or a prose passage of about 500-700 words, and it should be sufficiently rich to allow for a nuanced analysis that draws out not only the specific features of the passage and the work to which it belongs, but also general characteristics of the period and the literary or cultural tradition in question, showing "the universe in a grain of sand" (2 hours).
3. A period exam in the **first minor literature** (2 hours in length), based on a reading list of 15-20 works. The exam consists of a passage in the original language, chosen by the examiner from any single work on the reading list, which the student explicates in no less than four double-spaced pages. The passage can be in the form of a short poem or a prose passage of about 500-700 words, and it should be sufficiently rich to allow for a nuanced analysis that draws out not only the specific features of the passage and the work to which it belongs, but also general characteristics of the period and the literary or cultural tradition in question, showing "the universe in a grain of sand."

We ask exams be graded in two weeks, when the committee will meet with the student to discuss the exam results, the student's overall trajectory in the program, directions for future research, and potential dissertation committee members and directors. Every exam must have at least one member of the core faculty from CWL who will serve as chair of the committee and communicate the results of the exams to the DGS, the student and the committee when the exams are complete. The student designates the chair.