

## **ART HISTORY PhD EXAM STRUCTURE**

**Fall 2009, revised August 2011**

**Approved by the art history faculty, Fall 2009. Revisions approved by the art history faculty, August 2011. This PhD exam will be in effect for graduate students applying for the PhD degree in Fall 2010.**

### **Part I. Rationale for PhD examinations**

The PhD examinations are intended to serve two purposes: to insure the student's comprehensive, broadly based knowledge of a given field of inquiry in preparation for teaching, and to prepare the student for specialized research. To these ends, the examinations will test a student's knowledge of historical information pertaining to the art and culture of the period, historiography and methods of the field of inquiry, and theory and criticism (both historical and contemporary) appropriate for the field. We, as a department, wish to recognize that all these aspects of art history are important for every field.

### **Part II. Division of the History of Art**

We have attempted to make our divisions based on the conventional field definitions of art history, on the demands of the job market, and on the constellation of art historical fields represented in this particular department. In some cases, there will be an overlapping of the fields, and boundaries are intended to be somewhat flexible to meet the needs of the individual student's program.

Faculty and students are expected to adhere rigorously to the spirit of the exam structure. The student will be examined in three fields selected in consultation with the committee chair: one major, a second major, and one methodological or thematic field related to the student's dissertation research.

1. The choice for the major fields could be two contiguous fields but need not be. An external minor in another discipline (e.g., Medieval Studies, Women's Studies, History, Classics) can count as one of the two fields. A specialist in the external minor will be added to the examining committee.
2. The methodological/thematic field will be a focused exam on methodological or thematic questions related to the student's dissertation research.

### **Major Fields:**

African, Classical

African, Modern and Contemporary

African American

Byzantine, 4<sup>th</sup> c. – 1453 CE

China, 1<sup>st</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> c. CE

China, Modern

Contemporary

Early Modern Mediterranean Europe, 1250-1600 CE

Western European Art and Architecture, 1000-1400 CE

European Art and Architecture, 1400-1680 CE  
Modern Architecture, 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> c. CE  
European art, 1680-1850 CE  
European art, 1850-1960 CE  
Greek Art and Architecture  
Early/Medieval Islamic Art and Architecture (7<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> c. CE)  
Late Antiquity/Early Medieval (200 – 900 CE)  
Art and Architecture of Colonial Latin America  
Latin America, late 19<sup>th</sup> c. – present CE  
North American, 1700-1945 CE  
Roman Art and Architecture  
South Asian

**Part III. Internal Structure of the Examinations (Please consult GRADUATE SCHOOL HANDBOOK <http://handbook.unc.edu/phd.html>)**

The faculty recognizes that each field exam presents its own specialized problems in current scholarship, historiography, and material culture. The division into three general areas of examination allows for flexibility within each field area. The PhD exam recognizes the Graduate School's requirement for both a written and an oral exam that must be passed successfully by a majority of the examining committee. An oral exam will take place within two weeks of the written exam. The oral will be on the content of the written exams and may also include a defense of the dissertation prospectus.

1. The exam format can be flexible as to the distribution of the questions; specialists in the different fields decide what is most appropriate for each field. Each field exam will be 6 hours in duration. The exams will be taken over the period of 5 business days.
2. The student will be examined on a reading list that is prepared by the student in consultation with the examiners, preparing a sufficient bibliography that covers the major issues and artistic traditions of each field exam. A qualitative approach will be the model for the exam preparation, with the examiners taking into consideration publications in foreign languages when appropriate to the field exam. Each examiner will approve the number of books and articles and breadth of coverage appropriate for the field exam in their area of expertise
3. All examiners will contribute questions to the relevant field exams, to be coordinated by the committee chair.

Oral Exam in the 3 field areas:

Within two weeks of passing all the written examinations and within the same semester, students will take an oral examination on the three field areas chosen by the student and the committee chair. Graduate School regulations stipulate that students must have fulfilled, or will have fulfilled by the end of the semester in which the oral doctoral examination is to be taken, all of the required course work. The minimum residence credit requirement for the doctorate should also be satisfied at this time. The student's appointed committee will examine in both the written and oral portions. The oral examination will use the student's written examinations as a point of departure but may

cover any aspect of the three fields. A majority of the committee members must judge the candidate's performance acceptable for a passing grade (2 out of 3; or 3 out of 4).

### **Dissertation Prospectus:**

A dissertation prospectus should be submitted to the committee chair of the student's examination committee for approval. After the prospectus has been approved by a majority of the examination committee during an oral exam, the student should submit the prospectus to the departmental archive. The prospectus defense could take place during the oral exam held two weeks after the written exams, or it can take place within three months of the written exams. The submission due date for the prospectus will be determined by the committee chair in consultation with the dissertation writer.

### **Composition of the PhD examination committee and roles of committee members:**

The committee chair, in consultation with the graduate student, will select the members of the examining committee. The committee will consist of at least three members, who must be full-time active graduate faculty in art history or adjunct teaching faculty. If the student opts for an external exam, the committee chair will add a faculty member from the external field, for a total of four examiners. The chair of the committee will solicit questions from the other committee members. From these questions the chair will make a final selection and organize the exams. The chair of the committee is expected, as far as possible, to make the examination a collective enterprise of the committee. The chair will then circulate the examination for approval by the committee. All committee members will read all parts of each exam and return the exam within a reasonable length of time.

### **Part IV: Examinations**

A doctoral written examination, a doctoral oral examination, and a final oral examination covering the dissertation and other topics as required by the examining committee are required for doctoral degree completion.

The first two items together constitute a comprehensive examination of the student's command of **his** or **her** field. If the student declares a minor, the student will be examined on the minor in at least one of the two doctoral examinations. Together they should:

- assess the extent and currency of the candidate's knowledge in a manner that is as comprehensive and searching as the best practices of that field require;
- test the candidate's knowledge of all transferred courses;
- discover any weaknesses in the candidate's knowledge that need to be remedied by additional courses or other instruction; and
- determine the candidate's fitness to continue work toward the doctorate.

The final oral examination is primarily a true defense of the dissertation. It may be open to the public, limited in attendance to the candidate and the committee, or a combination of the two. Questions that relate the dissertation to the field are appropriate.

Exam Assessments:

The examinations are graded as Pass with Distinction (*H*), Pass (*P*), or Fail (*F*); pluses or minuses, while sometimes awarded, make no difference in the student's official grade. Students taking the examination for the first time shall fail if they do not receive a grade of *P* or *H* on all portions of the examination. Such failure will be reported to the Graduate School on the appropriate form as failure of the examination. Failing students shall be required to retake only the part or parts on which they received an *F*. As a rule, they will not be allowed to substitute a major or minor different from the one they have failed. Graduate School regulations require that at least three months elapse before a second taking of an examination. On retaking, students must pass all remaining parts of the examination with a grade of *P* or *H* or they will be judged to have failed the examination for the second time. A student who fails an examination for the second time becomes academically ineligible to continue in The Graduate School.

#### Student Responsibilities in Preparing to Re-Take Examinations:

A student who has failed an examination once is responsible for making an appointment with the faculty member named in the letter from the Director of Graduate Studies within a month of receiving the letter or by the end of the semester, whichever is earlier. After this meeting, the student is urged to consult other members of the examining committee.

The student should bring to the meeting a list of courses taken in the area of the failed examination and a brief description of the way in which he or she had prepared for the examination, including his or her focused reading lists and the comprehensive list for the field(s).

After the conference, the student is encouraged to make up a revised study plan, incorporating suggestions from the faculty member. This plan may be presented to the faculty member for review at the student's initiative.

The student should keep the Director of Graduate Studies informed of the progress being made in preparing for the retake so that a second examination can be scheduled in a timely manner. As already noted, Graduate School regulations require that at least three months elapse before the second taking of an examination.

#### **Reinstatement**

When special circumstances warrant, a student made academically ineligible under the conditions stated above may be reinstated upon petition initiated through the student's academic program. Students and academic program representatives must fill out the [Request for Reinstatement to Graduate School Form](#).

The student's director of graduate studies must submit the petition together with a statement endorsing or declining to endorse the student's request to the Graduate School. Final approval rests with the Graduate School. Graduate School staff are authorized to consider routine, first instances of reinstatement requests. If there is a disagreement between the student and his/her academic program, or for any subsequent reinstatement requests, the Academic Policy Committee of the Administrative Board of the Graduate School will hear and vote on the situation. Decisions are final and cannot be appealed.

After academic eligibility reinstatement, any subsequent grade below *P* or failure of the third attempt of written or oral examinations will result in the student becoming academically ineligible again.

#### **Time Line for PhD exams and prospectus**

- Examinee should make arrangements with the exam committee members to discuss reading lists.

**Spring:**

- First week of March, final reading list should be submitted to all members of the exam committee
- Third week of March, questions solicited from exam committee.
- First week of April, questions organized for exam and submitted to student services representative
- Second week of April, examinee sits for written exams
- Reading day of spring semester, oral defense of exam.

**Fall:**

- First week of October, final reading list should be submitted to all members of the exam committee.
- Third week of October, questions solicited from exam committee
- Second week of November, questions organized for exam and submitted to student services representative.
- Third week of November (or week before Thanksgiving Break), examinee sits for written exams and prospectus distributed to all members of exam committee.
- Reading day of fall semester, oral defense of exam