

Charles Mason

From: "Mary Martin" <marym@UDel.Edu>
To: <nina@UDel.Edu>
Cc: <aardis@UDel.Edu>
Sent: Sunday, November 14, 2004 10:24 AM
Subject: Art History program policy revisions

Nina, The Graduate Studies Senate Committee reviewed the changes to the Art History Program Policy Statement with regard to the changes in the Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination procedure. The Committee approved the document but made the following request for changes to the document. Please review these recommendations and if you accept them, send me a revised document. If you do not approve the recommendations, we will bring the document back to the Committee at its December 10th meeting at which time we would invite you to come to the meeting for discussion.

Here are the comments: In Michael Leja's memo, he states that the major field exam will have a written component (six hours) and an oral follow-up within one week (two hours). The Committee requested a rewording of the first paragraph of the section labeled "Comprehensive Examinations revised 8/2/04." I have rewritten the paragraph based on their recommendations (changes in red). Please review it to see if it is correct.

The Ph.D. student is required to take the Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination (including both PARTS OF THE major EXAMINATION and THE minor field examination) no later than the end of the second week of the second semester following the completion of Ph.D. course work. STUDENTS MUST COMPLETE THE Ph.D. course work and SATISFACTORILY COMPLETE the foreign language requirement PRIOR TO TAKING THE Ph.D. COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION.

Successful completion of both THE MAJOR AND MINOR FIELD EXAMINATIONS AS WELL AS THE APPROVAL OF THE STUDENT'S DISSERTATION PROPOSAL are required for admission to doctoral candidacy.

A second question was posed: Students must take the exam by the end of the second week of the second semester following the completion of the Ph.D. course work. I believe students would be registered in Pre-Candidacy Study during this time period. Is the time necessary to prepare for the examinations? Are students working on their dissertation proposals during this time period?

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1/17/2005



DEPARTMENT OF
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30 July 2004

Mary Martin
Asst. Provost for Graduate Studies
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Dear Mary,

The faculty of the Art History Department has voted to revise the form of its Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination, and I am writing to solicit approval for these revisions. Attached you will find a copy of the existing policy guidelines for the Department's graduate program along with a copy of the revised guidelines with the revised section highlighted. I will summarize below the rationale for the changes and their substance.

The changes were motivated by widespread dissatisfaction among faculty and students with the form of the major field exam. The exam as currently administered is not suited to the kinds of knowledge and critical thinking the faculty wishes to test. As a two-hour oral exam, it is too short and does not allow students adequate time to prepare the thoughtful answers of which they are capable. It is also completely anomalous when compared with the exam format employed in leading graduate programs in Art History. We surveyed the exam procedures at UC Berkeley, University of Chicago, Harvard, UMichigan, MIT, Northwestern, NYU, Penn, Princeton, and Stanford and discovered that all combine oral and written parts for the major field exam in order to test both mastery of broad issues and ability to analyze particular artifacts, both general knowledge and specific knowledge of the field, and both written and verbal skills. Our exam, by contrast, permits testing of relatively superficial knowledge, and students and faculty find this disappointing and anticlimactic after the long and arduous preparatory process.

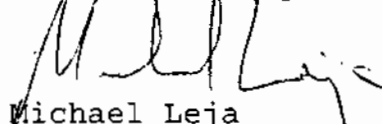
Most of the proposed changes address the major field exam. Instead of a two-hour oral exam, the major field exam will now have a written component (six hours) and an oral

follow-up within one week (two hours). We propose that students focus their preparation for the exam by articulating specific themes, worked out in consultation with with their examiners and the DGS. We also propose that one member of each student's examining committee will be a specialist in another field within the Department as a way of keeping exams from becoming narrow or provincial.

The minor field exam is changed only in minor ways: it now has a thematic organization, and the guidelines suggest a length for bibliographies. A modest effort at standardizing the exams across fields and faculty styles is another objective of the revisions.

Thank you for considering these revisions for Graduate School approval, and please let me know if you need any further information.

Yours sincerely,



Michael Leja
Chair, Department of Art History

cc. Ann Ardis, Associate Dean
Margaret Werth, DGS for Art History

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GRADUATE OFFICE

IV. THE Ph.D. PROGRAM

Requirements for the Ph.D. Degree

The Ph.D. student is required to be in continuous residence at the University of Delaware and pursue a full-time program of study for a minimum of one year (two connected semesters or consecutive spring and fall semesters).

A minimum of 24 credits of graduate course work beyond the M.A. is required, with at least 18 of these credits to be in Art History seminar courses and the other 6 to be selected from additional seminars, graduate lecture courses, or independent study courses, or a combination of these. Six credits are to be in an area or areas of art history outside of the major and minor fields of concentration. In addition to the 24 credits of graduate course work, 9 dissertation credits are required.

After consultation with the student, the Director of Graduate Studies will assign the student to a member of the faculty, normally someone familiar with the student's area of special interest, who will serve as a temporary adviser. After having successfully completed all course requirements and foreign language examinations, the student will seek to secure the agreement of one member of the faculty to serve as her or his adviser for the remaining degree requirements, the comprehensive examinations, and the dissertation. The faculty adviser should be someone familiar with the general area in which the student intends to take the major field examination and to write the dissertation. No faculty member is obligated to serve a student in this capacity; it is the responsibility of the student to secure the faculty member's agreement to serve. After an advisement agreement has been established between the student and a faculty member, the Director of Graduate Studies will be notified by both, and will thereafter assist both in the formation of committees for the comprehensive examinations and the dissertation.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS revised 8/2/04

(consisting of two parts)
The Ph.D. student is required to take the Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination, (including both major and minor field examinations) no later than the end of the second week of the second semester following the completion of Ph.D. course work, but not before having completed the Ph.D. course work and having satisfactorily completed the foreign language requirement. Successful completion of both parts of the comprehensive examination is required for admission to doctoral candidacy. *not before (or after)?*

Both the major and minor field examinations are assessed as either passing or failing. An affirmative vote for a passing grade by a majority of the examiners is necessary for the examination to be considered passing. Should the student fail either the major field or the minor field examination, the student will be given an opportunity to take that portion only for a second time. (The part already passed need not be retaken.) The second attempt to pass the examination must be made not later than the end of the first semester after the first attempt to pass that portion. That is, for example, if an examination is failed at any point during the fall term, it must be taken again by the end of the following spring term. Failure to pass the examination on the second attempt will result in

termination from the program effective at the end of that term. No third attempt will be permitted.

A student's major and minor fields should be reasonably distinct from one another, separated by some combination of geography, time period, media, or other factors as appropriate. Definition of the major and minor fields, although proposed by the student, must have the approval of the primary faculty adviser and the Director of Graduate Studies.

Students should indicate their intention to take the comprehensive examination at least four weeks in advance, using a special form available in the office. The major and minor examination may be taken with a computer by arrangement with the Assistant to the Chair in the Department.

MAJOR FIELD

The major field exam comprises written and oral components, both administered by an examining committee. The members of this committee will be determined by the primary faculty adviser and the Director of Graduate Studies after consulting with the student.

Typically the examining committee will include the primary faculty adviser and two or three other members. At least two (of the total 3 or 4) must be faculty in the Art History Department or in another Department at the University of Delaware; one member of the committee should be a member of the Art History faculty who is not a specialist in the field being examined.

The written component of the exam is designed to test the student's knowledge of the field (including works of art and significant themes and issues in the scholarship) and critical thinking. After consulting with the student the examining committee will define five to eight broad areas or themes that will guide preparation for the exam. Each area should encompass a broad segment of the field and command a substantial bibliography (e.g. the reception of antiquity in the Renaissance; nationalism in modern art; word and image in medieval art; portraiture and group portraiture in Dutch art; transcendentalism and American art). A bibliography usually containing 25 to 40 items (a mix of books and articles) for each theme will be prepared by the student and approved by the committee. The exam itself will consist of six questions designed by the examiners to engage the prepared areas. The student will be expected to answer three such questions within a period of six hours.

The oral component, a two-hour exam, will be held no more than one week after the written exam is completed. It may return to the questions posed in the written exam but is not restricted to them, and the student may be asked to relate particular works to themes addressed in the written exam.

MINOR FIELD

The minor field examining committee will contain two members of the department faculty determined by the primary faculty adviser and the Director of Graduate Studies after consultation with the student. Students should have taken seminars in the area of the minor field as part of the preparation for the exam. Unlike major fields, minor fields may be defined in a variety of ways that may be distinct from the major fields. The scope of the minor field may be proposed by the student but must be approved by the primary faculty adviser and the Director of Graduate Studies.

The minor field exam is modeled on the written part of the major field exam. Three to five broad areas or themes will be defined by the examining committee after consulting with the student. A bibliography containing 10 to 15 items for each theme will be prepared by the student and approved by the committee. The exam itself will consist of two parts and last for five hours. The first part will contain six questions designed by the examiners to engage the prepared areas. The student will be expected to answer three questions within a period of three and one-half hours. In the second part of the exam, the student will have ninety minutes to answer three of five questions based on specific works or groups of works which may be visual or textual.

Admission to Candidacy for the Ph.D. Degree

I have conducted a survey of the types of qualifying exams used in leading grad programs in Art History (or at least those whose grad requirements are posted on the web). The sample surveyed includes Berkeley, Princeton, Penn, Yale, Harvard, NYU, MIT, Stanford.

First, a few observations:

1. The majority requires no minor field. (B, PN, H, PR, S)
2. The vast majority combines oral and written parts in the major field exam. (only Y is entirely oral)
Usually a time period of 4 hours or more is allowed for the written part, and 2 hours for the oral.
3. Some programs require general and specific exams within the major field. (H, N)

All the programs surveyed make explicit their desire to test diverse things:

- mastery of broad issues and ability to analyze particular artifacts
- general knowledge and specific knowledge of the field
- written and verbal skills

The eccentricity of our present exam format was striking in this context. The two hour oral format is an inadequate arena for displaying competence, and just what it is that the exam proposes to test is not clear. No wonder students find it anticlimactic, and faculty find student performances disappointing. I propose the following revised description as a point of departure for our discussions.