

# GUIDELINES FOR THE M.A. COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION AND LITERATURE OPTION READING LIST

Fall 2005

Literature Option students are responsible for four different literary periods. They should prepare to answer a question on one period from each of the four categories below. (Teaching Assistants in the literature option are responsible for one period from each of the first three categories as well as a question on writing pedagogy and rhetoric.) The comprehensive examination will be offered by arrangement with the Graduate Program Director. Usually, students choose to take the exam following the completion of their graduate coursework in early to mid June or mid to late January. Students should meet with the Graduate Program Director at least two months prior to specify the four (or three for teaching assistants) literary periods of choice and to apply for a timeslot. After consultation with all of the students who have applied for an exam slot, the Director will set specific times, dates and locations. Normally, the examination (between), with two periods covered in each part one in the morning and one in the afternoon. (Note: Students who wish to take the exam at times other than those indicated above should discuss their options with the Director.)

The Four Categories:

1. **Medieval and Renaissance or Restoration and 18th Century**
2. **19th Century British or American Literature to the 20th Century**
3. **20th Century American or 20th Century British**
4. **One additional period** from the six listed above (or writing pedagogy and rhetoric for teaching assistants)

For each of the four parts of the M.A. comprehensive examination, students will have at least two questions to choose from. Texts and notes are not allowed for the examination, although specific small poems or quoted excerpts may be provided with or within the question itself. Questions may require students to work with a single long work, a selection of works by a single author or poet, or a selection of works by a group of writers. The essays should demonstrate the student dealing intelligently and cogently with matters such as analyzing literary texts, discussing their inherent thematic issues, addressing matters of form and/or content, and so on.

Examinations will be graded by no fewer than two faculty readers who will determine if each essay is high pass, pass or fail. In cases of disagreement, there will be a third reader. Whenever possible, at least one of the readers will be a specialist in the area the question covers. Usually, the readers will not know the name of the student whose exam they are grading nor will the students know the identities of the readers.

A student may attempt the test a maximum of two times. If the student fails more than two parts on the first attempt, he or she must retake the entire examination. In the second attempt, he or she must then pass no fewer than three parts. If a student fails two parts on the first attempt, he or she must retake two parts and pass at least one on the second attempt. If a student fails one part, he or she must retake that part. In any case, if the student fails one part twice, he or she will undertake an assigned research project in that area under the supervision of by a faculty member designated by the graduate committee. Students who fail to pass three parts of the examination in two tries will not be awarded the M.A. in English.

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**MA LITERATURE OPTION**

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## 19TH CENTURY BRITISH

Arnold

"Dover Beach"  
"Stanza from the Grand Chartreuse"

Browning

"My Last Duchess"  
"The Bishop Orders His Tomb"  
"Fra Lippo Lippi"

Carlyle

Keats

"The Eve of St. Agnes"  
"Ode to a Nightingale"  
"Ode on a Grecian Urn"  
"To Autumn"

Shelley

Tennyson

"Locksley Hall"  
"The Lady of Shalott"  
"The Lotus-Eaters"  
"Ulysses"

Wordsworth

*Lyrical Ballads* (including Preface)  
"Ode: Intimations of Immortality"

Austen

*Pride and Prejudice*

Brontë

*Jane Eyre*

Dickens

*Hard Times*

Shelley

*Frankenstein*

## AMERICAN LITERATURE TO THE 20TH CENTURY

Dickinson

"Because I could not stop for Death"  
"These are the days when birds come back--"  
"Wild Nights--Wild Nights!"  
"There's a certain slant of light"  
"The soul selects her own society--"  
"After great pain, a formal feeling comes--"  
"I heard a fly buzz--when I died--"  
"A narrow fellow in the grass"  
"Tell all the truth but tell it slant--"

Whitman

"Song of Myself"

Hawthorne

"Young Goodman Brown"  
"My Kinsman, Major Molineaux"

Melville

"Benito Cereno"  
*Billy Budd*

Poe

Chopin

*The Awakening*

Douglass

*Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*

Twain

*Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

