

PhD General Examinations in Portuguese and Brazilian Studies

GENERAL EXAMINATIONS

The general exams in Portuguese and Brazilian Studies are taken at the end of the third year of study. Students must have completed all required coursework for the degree before they take the general exams. Students should discuss the reading lists for the general exams with the exam committee at the end of the second year of study to allow ample time to read and prepare for the exams (see further details on reading lists below). The general exams cover both Portuguese and Brazilian literatures for all students, regardless of individual specialization.

The purpose of the general exams is to demonstrate a student's mastery of the broad scope of Portuguese and Brazilian literatures across genres, chronological periods, major authors, and literary and aesthetic movements. While it is clearly not possible to cover all aspects of these literatures, the exam is structured to demonstrate a comprehension of selected literary and aesthetic moments in Portugal and Brazil, based on a student's coursework, projected plan of study, and general interests. At the same time, the exam requires students to provide in-depth analyses of texts, theoretical issues, or related aesthetic, cultural, or historical topics.

There is both a written and an oral component to the general exams. There are 2 days of written exams (3 hours each day), and a third day devoted to the oral exam (2 hours). The written portion of the exams will include questions intended to demonstrate a student's broad understanding of aspects of literary and cultural topics, in addition to questions focused on specific texts and ideas related to a student's curriculum and interests. During the oral exam, the members of the examination committee may ask students to clarify or elaborate on topics covered in the written exam or to answer questions based on the reading lists that were not specifically covered in the written exam. A portion of the oral exam will also be dedicated to a brief discussion of potential dissertation topics. It should be noted that the general exams are not narrowly focused on a student's research interests. The dissertation prospectus is a separate exercise.

EXAM COMMITTEE AND READING LISTS

In the spring semester of the second year of study, the student should speak with the principal advisor about assembling an examination committee of approximately 3 faculty members. This examination committee may include faculty members from outside of RLL. The members of the exam committee will consult with the student in drawing up reading lists for the general exams.

The general exams reading lists should include canonical and non-canonical texts, authors, and critical approaches. These lists may include material from related disciplines or cross-disciplinary approaches. Two major reading lists will be devised: one for Portuguese Studies, and one for Brazilian Studies. Students may include works from Lusophone countries in Africa or Asia, and have the option to devise a reading list representing a Secondary Field. The two major reading lists, of 20-30 items each, will include books and essays of primary and secondary sources. Optional secondary reading lists may include 10-15 items.