

Ph.D. FIELD EXAMINATION
in
Literary Theory and Criticism
May 2003

To the Candidate

This examination consists of three parts:

Part I: Literary Theory and Criticism to 1930; weighted at 20%

Part II: The Core List; weighted at 40%

Part III: Postmodernism; weighted at 40%

To fulfill the requirements of the examination, you must answer one question in each of the three parts.

Read the entire examination before beginning and select your questions and responses to avoid repetition of writers and texts.

Do not discuss a single theorist or work in more than one answer.

Expectations: Candidates are expected to indicate their knowledge of specific works, schools, approaches, movements and trends, to analyse and evaluate them individually and comparatively, and to formulate carefully structured arguments.

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Part I: Literary Theory and Criticism to 1930

Choose one of the following questions and write an essay in response. This question is weighted at 20%. In your answer, discuss at least THREE writers from the Literary Theory and Criticism to 1930 list, and refer to specific works.

1. How do literary critics make use of past works of literary criticism in establishing their arguments or authority (or both)?
2. Literature is often considered in theory and criticism to 1930 to be a source of social improvement. Compare and criticize selected models which support this position.
3. Lyricism has been defined rather simply as the representation of moments of significant fullness or emptiness. Discuss how forms of lyricism have been used in theory and criticism before 1930.

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Part II: The Core List

Choose one of the following questions and write an essay in response. This question is weighted at 40%. In your response, be sure to consider in depth at least THREE of the theorists on the Core List, and refer to specific works.

1. Discuss the special status of figurative language in literary theory and criticism.
2. To what extent does the materiality of the text - its physical properties, and its historical situations, both original and continuing - affect interpretation?
3. Some theorists assume that all human subjects are more the same than different. Some assume that differences between subjects are fundamental. Discuss how these assumptions about human subjectivity affect the priorities of theory and criticism.

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Part III: Postmodernism

Choose one of the following questions and write an essay in response. This question is weighted at 40%. In your response, be sure to consider at least THREE of the theorists and their works from the subcategory Postmodernism, Part III of the reading list.

1. In its representation of the relationship between the author and the text, how does Postmodern theory differ from its predecessors?
2. Discuss the role that pathologies (social or individual disorders, physical or psychological illnesses, or other forms of dysfunction) play in Postmodern theory.
3. Discuss how and on what basis three Postmodernist theorists represent all acts of interpretation as decodings or decryptings or decipherings.