

**Ph.D. Area Examination  
in  
Literary Theory and Criticism**

**May 2008**

To the Candidate:

This examination consists of three parts:

Part I: On areas 1-2 of the Reading List; weighted at 20%

Part II: On ONE of Areas 3-9 of the Reading List; weighted at 40%

Part III: On TWO or more of Areas of the Reading List, excluding texts already discussed in Part I & II; weighted at 40%

In the entire exam, you must discuss a minimum of THREE areas of the Reading List.

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 particular theorist or work in more than one answer.

You have FOUR hours to complete this exam.

Expectations: Candidates are expected to demonstrate their knowledge of specific works, schools, approaches, movements and trends, to analyze and evaluate them individually and comparatively, and to formulate carefully structured arguments. Each of your answers should demonstrate a breadth of knowledge by referring to several specific writers and works.

### Part I:

Choose one of the following questions and write an essay in response, drawing from Areas 1-2 of the Reading List. This question is weighted at 20%.

1. Do literary texts make arguments? If they do, do they make them in a distinctively literary way? Discuss how a range of critics have addressed these questions.
2. Is there a hierarchy among the different genres of literature? Discuss how a range of critics have addressed this issue.
3. Literature is often praised as a vehicle of moral education. Discuss how a range of critics have addressed this issue.
4. In his *Lyrical Ballads* Wordsworth aimed "to imitate, and, as far as possible, to adopt the very language of men". Discuss how a range of critics have represented literature's relation to ordinary language.

### Part II:

Choose one of the following questions and write an essay in response, drawing from writers and texts from ONE of areas 3-9 of the Reading List. This question is weighted at 40%.

1. Recent literary theories have had difficulty balancing the autonomy of the literary object against the need to situate it in a social and political context. Discuss how one of the theoretical areas represented in areas 3-9 handles this problem.
2. Do literary texts manage and contain ideological and social conflicts or take sides in them? Discuss how one of the theoretical areas represented in areas 3-9 addresses this question.
3. How do literary texts engage with the subjectivity of readers? Discuss how one of the theoretical areas represented in areas 3-9 answers this question.
4. "The advent of theory . . . occurs with the introduction of linguistic terminology in the metalanguage about literature." (Paul de Man). Discuss this claim in relation to one of the theoretical areas represented in areas 3-9.

**Part III:**

**Choose one of the following questions and write an essay in response, drawing from writers and texts from at least TWO areas of the Reading List, but excluding texts already discussed in Part I and II of this exam. This question is weighted at 40%.**

1. Does literature have a social mission? Compare and contrast how two theoretical areas represented in 1-9 of the reading list answer this question.
2. Compare and contrast how two theoretical areas represented in areas 1-9 of the reading list conceive of the act of interpretation.
3. What is the point of literary theory? Compare and contrast how two theoretical areas represented in areas 1-9 on the reading list address this question.
4. Compare and contrast how two theoretical areas represented in areas 1-9 on the reading list evaluate the cognitive claims of literary texts.