

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

November 2007

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. According to its detractors, literature lies: it invents things that are not. Discuss how at least three critics have negotiated the truth claims of literature.
2. Is literature primarily a linguistic or a humanist activity or both? Discuss how at least three critics have addressed this issue.
3. Can literature transform its reader or auditor? Discuss what at least three critics have to say about the transformative power of literature.
4. Discuss how at least three critics represent the role of the author in the creation of literature.

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. The first activity of theory is to define the object of study. Discuss how one of the theoretical areas represented in areas 3-9 defined the object of their study.
2. A claim often made for literature is that it reproduces in both its content and form the fundamental antagonisms, splits, or division of its culture. Discuss how one of the theoretical areas represented in areas 3-9 discuss this reproduction, especially as to whether the antagonism, split, or division is resolved or remains unresolved.
3. Politics has been defined as the name we give to the organization of violence in a society and the forms of domination that come from that organized violence (sovereignty). In what ways, then, does literature reflect or embody the effects of domination? Discuss how one of the theoretical areas represented in areas 3-9 address this question.
4. Literature, read or heard, is a physical encounter with graphic or sonic sensations. How is this materiality of literature addressed or neglected by one of the theoretical areas represented in areas 3 to 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. One of the primary actions of an emergent theory or practice seems to be to discover new frameworks for representing the human subject as active or as passive or as both. Compare and contrast how your selected writers and texts frame this issue.
2. Compare and contrast how your selected writers and texts posit particular elements of language as the crucial indices of identity or subjectivity.
3. Compare and contrast how the role of imitation, repetition, or iteration in literature or language is understood by your selected writers and texts.
4. The occasional or historical nature of utterance would seem to conflict with the monumental claims sometimes made for literature. Compare and contrast how your selected writers and texts conceptualize literature's historicity.