

Ph.D. FIELD EXAMINATION

in

Literary Theory and Criticism

November 2001

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 fulfil the requirements of the examination, you must answer one question from each of the three parts.

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

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.

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. Much of pre-1930 theory and criticism is concerned with the ethical function of literature. With precision, compare and contrast this concern in the work of three theorists from Part I of the reading list.
2. Tragedy has always seemed to be the preeminent or original genre in literary theory. Discuss what claims have been made for or against tragedy by three theorists from Part I of the reading list.
3. Discuss rhetorical, generic or formal characteristics in three defences of literature prior to 1930.

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 their work.

1. Theories of literature require implicit or explicit theories of language. Discuss the relationships between theories of literature and theories of language in the works of at least three of the writers on the core reading list.
2. Discuss how three theorists from the core reading list have formulated the relation between multiple verbal systems (e.g., multiple voices, discourses, languages) present in literature.
3. Rhetoric and literature have a long and complicated history as rhetoric and philosophy. Discuss how three theorists from the core reading list formulated the relation between rhetoric and literature.

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. Do not discuss in depth those works of Postmodernism you may have already discussed in Part II of the examination.

1. Discuss how three theorists from the postmodernism reading list reconceptualized the relation between nature and culture.
2. Discuss the role of technology in the production, reception and interpretation of literature with reference to works by any three theorists on the postmodernism reading list.
3. Postmodernism famously destabilizes the position of the critic in relation to the text. How is this instability described, and how is it performed, in the works of any three theorists from the postmodernism reading list?