**SAMPLE Comprehensive Exam (Literature-Based; Focus: Gothic Detective Fiction)**

**Instructions**

The examination has three parts; you must answer one question from each part.

Your answers should have a clear thesis and demonstrate both familiarity with the texts themselves and knowledge of issues in the field.

You will answer a total of THREE questions on this exam: one from Part A (Depth), one from Part B (Breadth), and one from Part C (Dissertation).

Each question should be answered using at least THREE texts from your reading list unless stated otherwise.

Note that to satisfy these minimum requirements, you may not refer to the same item on more than one answer unless you have already satisfied the minimum for that particular answer.

All questions are weighted equally.

**Part A: Breadth**

Answer ONE of the three questions below.

1. Drawing on representative texts, chart the rise of the Gothic tradition from its origins in the late 18th through to the end of the 19th century.
2. What are the salient differences and continuities between Gothic fiction and horror fiction?
3. Drawing on representative texts from the mystery genre, discuss some of the key theoretical concepts by which we can understand the nature and establishment of “detecting authority” in mystery/crime novels.

**Part B: Depth**

Answer ONE of the three questions below.

1. Discuss the role of adolescents (say, 10-18 years) in some of the texts on your reading list. Why are protagonists in this age range so common and what is the effect of this choice?
2. The figure of the double is a narrative element in Gothic fiction. Discuss examples of the double from works on your list, with particular attention to narrative function of such figures.
3. How is the “occult detective” defined, and what is relationship between occult and merely quotidian detection?

**Part C: Dissertation**

Answer ONE of the questions below.

1. In your dissertation proposal, you suggest that amateur detectives (as opposed to trained police detectives or experienced private investigators) have become more commonplace in contemporary books and films. What sorts of cultural, historical, ideological, and technological factors might help explain this shift?
2. In *Monster Theory*, Jeffrey Cohen asserts that "the monster's body is a cultural body" (4). With this in mind, examine the portrayal of Gothic monsters in three texts from your list. How are they similar or how do they differ?
3. Your dissertation proposal suggests that a key to understanding the role of amateur detectives lies in the concept of “authority.” Writers of books and films must always attend to this concept so as to create convincing protagonists. But you also suggest amateur detectives often emerge by chance in these narratives. Discuss your notion of “authority by chance.”