

## **RELIGION AND LITERATURE AREA GUIDELINES**

### **I. Purpose and Nature of the Area**

The Religion and Literature area concentrates on the reciprocal relations between literature and religion. It seeks out the religious dimensions of secular texts and makes use of the methods of secular literary studies in the analysis of religious texts. This area is concerned, in courses and examinations, with the historical background of religion-and-literature as an academic discipline, and with the methods and theories that have been developed in exemplary critical and historical studies in the field. Students are encouraged to take courses in English, Comparative Literature, and other departments of languages and literatures as needed for their research. Resources of the Divinity School and the University at large also provide extensive possibilities for students to pursue studies more comparative and cross-cultural in nature. Over the years, degree candidates in this area have written dissertations on a great variety of topics. (A constantly updated list of these dissertations may be obtained from members of the area faculty.)

### **II. Admissions Procedures**

For the general requirements, please see the Announcements of the Divinity School. Students without an advanced degree will apply for admission to the M.A. program of the Divinity School. During the first four quarters of their residence, they must complete three courses in the area of Religion and Literature, one of which must be "Introduction to Religion and Literature." In order to facilitate admission to doctoral studies, students should consult with faculty members in this area with a view toward designing a course of study and selecting appropriate examinations at the Ph.D. qualifying level. When applying for doctoral admission, the student should submit a paper written to complete the requirement for a course in Religion and Literature. This paper will be reviewed, along with the student's transcript and course of study petition, by the area faculty. The application process for M.A. students seeking Ph.D. admission is described in the "Guidelines of the Committee on Degrees" available in Swift 104.

Students entering the Divinity School who already hold an M.A. (or its equivalent) in either religious studies or a literary discipline will be required, in consultation with a faculty member in this area, to select four Ph.D. qualifying examinations (two of which will be those offered by the Religion and Literature area) appropriate to their projected program of specialized studies. The admission into doctoral studies is completed when the Committee on Degrees of the Divinity School accepts the petition of the student to take (1) a certain course of studies as outlined in the petition and (2) such selected examinations. This petition is submitted in either the third or the fourth quarter of residency. (Students who matriculate in the Ph.D. program must only submit the petition; they are not required to submit a course paper.) The process for Ph.D. students seeking approval of a course of study is described in the "Guidelines of the Committee on Degrees," available in Swift 104.

### III. Requirements

#### A. Courses

All students with a concentration in Religion and Literature are expected to make full use of courses offered in The Divinity School and in the appropriate graduate divisions of the University. Since the area has as its ideal the student's competence in both religious and other humanistic studies, it expects them to make a balanced selection of courses designed to complement their academic backgrounds, to redress any deficiencies, and to prepare them for doctoral specializations. In general, students are strongly encouraged to take a minimum of two courses in each of the following areas:

- (1) **History of criticism and theories of interpretation:** courses in this area should focus on the theoretical aspects of criticism, including philosophical hermeneutics and biblical interpretation.
- (2) **Practical literary criticism:** courses in this area should focus on the analysis of figures, texts, and/or specific genres.
- (3) **General studies in religion:** courses in this area should cover such topics as the theories of religion, the relation of religious inquiry to the human sciences, and specific philosophical, theological, and historical problems (e.g. "Theism and Ethical Theory", "Christian Symbols and the Experience of Women", "Religion and the Body", "Miracle Stories in Antiquity", "Myth and Midrash").

#### B. Examinations

##### (1) **Languages**

See Announcements. In the event that a student's specialization involves languages other than French and German, competency may be established by means of course work and examination.

##### (2) **Ph.D. Qualifying Examination**

The Ph.D. Qualifying Examination consists of four written exams and an oral examination based on a research paper submitted for the occasion. See the Divinity School Announcements for general guidelines.

##### (a) **Written Exams**

All doctoral students take four examinations selected from those offered by the areas of study in the Divinity School. RL students are required to take RL 1, and one other RL exam. Students are strongly urged to select a second exam from RL and two exams from those offered by another area or areas of study in the Divinity School. Given the demands of the academy, students concentrating in RL must develop substantial expertise in a more traditional field in the academic study of religion. Such expertise should be reflected in the other two exams the student selects.

Students concentrating in Religion and Literature select their exams in consultation with their faculty advisor. When doing so, the student establishes a provisional list of readings for the RL written exams. This list may undergo revision as the student proceeds through the course of study. Because all RL faculty participate in the writing of all exams for students concentrating in the area, RL students should consult each RL faculty member concerning their bibliographies after consulting with their advisor and prior to finalization in the course of study petition. No later than the quarter preceding the examination, the student finalizes the reading lists for Religion and Literature exams with the advisor, and distributes copies of these to all members of the Religion and Literature faculty.

Students concentrating in another area who elect to take an exam in RL may elect to take any one of the available RL examinations; in this case, the student will work with one RL faculty member to develop a book list appropriate for a particular exam, and that faculty member will be the sole examiner. No later than the quarter preceding the examination, the student finalizes the reading lists for Religion and Literature exams with the examiner.

All written examinations are open book and four hours in length, and will involve answering one, but no more than three questions.

**(b) Oral Exam**

The oral component of the qualifying examination is based principally on a paper submitted by the student for the occasion. The paper should demonstrate the student's capacity for research (including, where appropriate, the use of foreign language materials), analysis, and argumentation. This essay, which should be written from an interdisciplinary perspective, may focus on certain theoretical, historical, or comparative problems, the critical analysis of texts, or a constructive argument concerning inter-disciplinary study. The paper is to be submitted to the student's advisor for review in the quarter preceding the examination, and to all members of the examining committee by the first week of the quarter of the examination.

The examining committee for students concentrating in RL normally will consist of all members of the RL area faculty and at least two other professors appropriately drawn from members of the Divinity and University faculty.

Whether or not the student has passed the written examinations will be reviewed formally on the occasion, and at the discretion of the examining committee the student may be questioned further on these examinations.

**C. Dissertation**

**(1) Preparation of the dissertation proposal and completion of the colloquium.** Upon successful completion of the Ph.D. Qualifying Examinations, the student, in consultation with the faculty person with whom he or she wishes to work, will prepare a dissertation proposal in accordance with the School's established guidelines (see "Guidelines of the

Committee on Degrees”). Frequently one member of the student's dissertation committee may be from one of the literature departments of the University. After the proposal has been approved by the advisor and readers at an informal colloquium, and after approval of the proposal by the Committee on Degrees, the student is formally admitted to candidacy for the Ph.D. degree.

- (2) **Oral Review.** After the proposal has been accepted, the candidate will continue research and begin to write the dissertation. When a representative portion of the thesis (usually half) is completed, the student will arrange for the scheduling of a dissertation oral review. The purpose of this review is to provide evaluation and guidance for the candidate at the midpoint of the writing process. For this occasion the candidate will distribute to the committee either the completed portions of the thesis or, preferably, a shorter essay which will summarize and discuss both the results of the research thus far and indicate the direction toward which the thesis is moving. During the review the candidate will be encouraged to complete the dissertation as planned, or advised to make appropriate revisions or remedy deficiencies.
- (3) **Defense of the Dissertation.** The final requirement of the doctoral program is the successful defense of the dissertation before the student's dissertation committee. The committee may recommend to the Dean that this requirement be waived.

## THE PH.D QUALIFYING EXAMINATIONS IN RELIGION & LITERATURE

### Examination 1: History of Criticism and Literary Theory

Students are expected to demonstrate a basic knowledge of the history of criticism and literary theory, thorough familiarity with selected major texts, and the ability to discuss in detail significant problems and issues.

Twelve texts are to be chosen, including at least 3 from each of the following historical periods:

#### A. Classical and Medieval

- e.g. Plato, Ion, Cratylus, Phaedrus, or The Republic  
Aristotle, On Interpretation, Rhetoric, or Poetics  
Longinus, On the Sublime  
Plotinus, Ennead  
Augustine, De doctrina christiana  
Dante, De vulgari eloquentia, Letter to Can Grande

#### B. Renaissance through Nineteenth Century

- e.g. Sidney, Defense of Poesie  
Dryden, Essay of Dramatic Poesy  
Hume, "Of Tragedy," "Of the Standards of Taste"  
Kant, Critique of Judgment

Pope, Essay on Criticism  
Johnson, Selected Writings  
Addison, Selected Writings  
Wordsworth, "Preface to Lyrical Ballads"  
Shelley, Defense of Poetry  
Arnold, Selections from Essays, First & Second Series

C. Twentieth Century

e.g. T. S. Eliot, selections  
Richards, Philosophy of Literary Criticism  
James, Art of Fiction  
Lukacs, Theory of the Novel  
Frye, Anatomy of Criticism  
Heidegger, Origin of a Work of Art  
Gadamer, Truth and Method  
Derrida, Grammatology  
Williams, Marxism and Literature  
Bloom, Anxiety of Influence  
Gilbert and Gubar, Mad Woman in the Attic  
Lacan, Écrits

**Examination 2: Classic Texts in Religion and Literature**

This examination has a double purpose: to cover (1) some central texts that form the indispensable background to religion and literature as an academic discipline, and (2) some major works of our own time that stake out representative positions within the field. The list that follows is meant to be exemplary and suggestive for the student's own interdisciplinary work. Other authors and other works by authors on the list may be proposed for this examination. Although students are expected to read books in their entirety, in certain cases only a chapter or two from a given title will be directly relevant for this examination. Six works from each of the two lists are required. Students concentrating on Religion and Literature may not duplicate titles appearing in Examination 1.

A. Background

Schleiermacher, Hermeneutik  
Hegel, Lectures on Aesthetics (trans. as Philosophy of Fine Arts)  
Schiller, On Naive and Sentimental Poetry  
F. Schelling, The Ages of the World  
Schopenhauer, Selections from The World as Will and Idea  
Kierkegaard, Concept of Irony, Selections from Fear and Trembling, Either/Or  
Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy, Selections from The Will to Power  
Coleridge, Selections from Biographia Literaria, Aids to Reflection  
Arnold, Literature and Dogma, Culture and Anarchy  
Santayana, Interpretations of Poetry and Religion

B. Modernity

I. A. Richards, Science and Poetry

T. S. Eliot, Selected Titles or Essays

Selected Essays on literature and the problem of belief by

Tate, Blackmur, Brooks, and Abrams

Erich Auerbach, Mimesis, Scenes from the Drama of European

Literature

F. O. Matthiessen, The American Renaissance

M. H. Abrams, Natural Supernaturalism

Nathan Scott, Negative Capability, The Broken Center

Sacvan Bercovitch, The Puritan Origins of the American Self

Paul Ricoeur, Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, Essays on

Biblical Interpretation, Oneself as Another

Kenneth Burke, The Rhetoric of Religion

Northrop Frye, Fables of Identity, The Great Code

Julia Kristeva, The Black Sun

Frank Kermode, The Sense of An Ending, The Genesis of Secrecy

Robert Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative

Harold Bloom, Kabbalah and Criticism, Ruin the Sacred Truths

Geoffrey Hartman, ed., Midrash and Literature

Martha Nussbaum, Love's Knowledge

**Examination 3: Genres of Literature**

This examination is designed to test the student's ability in literary analysis. Twelve texts are to be selected, representing two genres (e.g. comedy, tragedy, lyric poetry, epic, romance, and the novel). Each genre will have six texts. Two texts will suffice for the genre of epic. For lyric poetry a substantial group of lyrics constitutes the equivalent of a book.

**(Amendment, approved 1/1/2001)** Any student taking this examination, in consultation with appropriate faculty members, may expand the book list for a single genre (e.g., the novel) to a maximum of 12 titles for half of that examination. For the second literary genre, a minimum of 6 titles (with exception for the genre of epic, the number for which is 2) is required.