RELIGION, LITERATURE, AND VISUAL CULTURE AREA GUIDELINES

I. Purpose and Nature of the Area

The Divinity School’s program in Religion, Literature, and Visual Culture represents the oldest and longest-standing program of its kind in the country. Created by Preston Roberts and consolidated under the leadership of Nathan Scott under the title “Theology and Literature,” the program became “Religion and Literature” in the 1960s and retained that name while extending its ambit to include comparative study, literary theory (including hermeneutics and aesthetics), and the boundaries between literature and other aesthetic and critical human endeavors. Its most recent change in name reflects the appointment of colleagues in art history, and growing interest among faculty and students in that field but also in cinema studies. Throughout its history the program has always been and remains today resolutely engaged with both other areas of study in the Divinity School and other divisions and departments of the University. Put prosaically: while the program presses the crucial question of the “and” in the area’s title, it predicates no single formulation of the “and”.

The area is concerned, in courses and examinations, with the historical background of the myriad intersections of religion, literature, and visual culture – a history that reflects both perennial issues in the world’s cultures, and the 20th-century academic discipline – and with the methods and theories that have been developed in exemplary critical and historical studies. Students are encouraged to take courses in English, Comparative Literature, Cinema and Media Studies, Art History, and other departments of languages and literatures as needed for their research. Resources of the Divinity School and the University at large also afford extensive possibilities for students to pursue studies that are comparative and cross-cultural. 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. Ph.D. Matriculation

(For general requirements and application procedures, please see the Announcements of the Divinity School. (For an outline of this application process, see “Guidelines of the Committee on Degrees”.)

Entering M.A. or M.Div. students must complete, by the end of the autumn quarter of their final year of residence in their master’s program, three courses in the area. To facilitate admission to doctoral studies, students should consult with faculty members in the area with a view toward designing a course of study and selecting appropriate Ph.D. qualifying examinations. When applying for doctoral admission, the student must also submit a paper written to complete the requirement for a course offered in Religion, Literature, and Visual Culture. This paper will be reviewed, along with the student’s transcript and course of study petition, by the area faculty.
Entering Ph.D. students (who already hold a master’s degree in either the study of religion or a cognate discipline in the humanities or social sciences) will be required, in consultation with faculty members in this area, to select four Ph.D. qualifying examinations (two of which will be RLVC 1 and RLVC 2) appropriate to their projected program of specialized studies. Their admission to 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 must be approved 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.)

III. Requirements

A. Courses

All students with a concentration in Religion, Literature, and Visual Culture 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 fields of study, 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 three 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, aesthetics, 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.

B. Pre-Exam Advising Conference

A student’s advisor, together with the faculty who agreed to write qualifying examinations for the student, will convene a conference with the student by the end of the second year of residency. Per existing guidelines for qualifying examinations the faculty cohort must number no less than four and include at least one examiner from outside Religion, Literature, and Visual Culture. The faculty will evaluate the student’s overall academic progress to date and assess her or his preparation for the planned qualifying examination. As part of the meeting the student will circulate, at least one month in advance of the meeting, a paper that represents their evolving research interests. A record of the conference will be placed in the student’s academic file, and will include a proposed quarter for taking the qualifying examination. In rare cases, the student may be advised to transfer to another academic program, or to withdraw from the Ph.D. program.
C. 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. RLVC students are required to take RLVC 1 and RLVC 2. Given the demands of the academy, students concentrating in RLVC should 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, Literature and Visual Culture select their exams in consultation with their faculty advisor. When doing so, the student establishes a provisional list of readings for the RLVC written exams. This list may undergo revision as the student proceeds through the course of study. Because all RLVC faculty participate in the writing of all exams for students concentrating in the area, RLVC students should consult each RLVC 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 RLVC may elect to take any one of the available RLVC examinations; in this case, the student will work with one RLVC 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, Literature, and Visual Culture exams with the examiner.

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

(b) Oral Exam
The oral component of the qualifying examination is based both on the written exams and on the paper submitted by the student for the occasion. One section of the exam will be devoted to clarifying and expanding on material from the written exam and the other section will be devoted to discussion of the paper. 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 RLVC normally will consist of relevant members of the RLVC area faculty and at least two other professors appropriately drawn from members of the Divinity and University faculty.

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 in the Divinity School.

(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 approximately 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. 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. It is customary at the Divinity school for the committee to waive this requirement. However, committee may recommend to the Dean that the defense be held.

THE PH.D QUALIFYING EXAMINATIONS IN RELIGION, LITERATURE, AND VISUAL CULTURE

RLVC Examination 1: Theories of Criticism

This exam surveys major statements in the theory of interpretation in the West. It has three components, of which students in RLVC should choose two. The first component concerns the history of criticism through the nineteenth century, the second focuses on twentieth century literary theory and the third focuses on theories of visual culture. For the twentieth century
students select three (3) of the six designated areas to complete their bibliography.

This exam is required of students concentrating in RLVC. Students concentrating in other areas who wish to take this exam may do so with any faculty member(s) in RLVC, and the list may be adapted in consultation with the examiner. A student may, for example, pursue an exam that emphasizes visual theory or philosophical approaches to interpretation, or may pursue a comparison of select materials from this bibliography with another major interpretive history, e.g., Indian hermeneutics.

Students taking this exam should have completed at least two (2) courses from the RLVC sequence on the history of literary theory and interpretation.

Bibliography

A. Theory of Literature (Plato to 18th Century):
   Examiner: Richard Rosengarten

   Plato, Symposium or Republic or Gorgias or Cratylus
   Aristotle, Poetics
   Demetrius, On Style
   Longinus, On the Sublime
   Origen, On First Principles (Bks 1 & 4)
   Augustine, On Christian Teaching
   Either Plotinus, Enneads (selections) or Pseudo-Dionysius, The Divine Names
   Cassian, Three Treatises on the Divine Images
   Maimonides, Guide to the Perplexed
   Dante, De Vulgari Eloquentia
   Luther, “Babylonian Captivity”
   Translators’ Preface, King James Bible
   Vasari, Lives of the Artists
   Sydney, “Defense of Poetry”
   Spinoza, Tractatus
   Addison & Steele, The Spectator (selections)
   Burke, On the Sublime
   Pope, Essay on Man
   Hume, “Of the Standard of Taste”
   Johnson, “Preface to Shakespeare”
   Lowth, Lectures on Hebrew Poetry
   Mendelssohn, Jerusalem
   Kant, Critique of Judgment

B. Theory of Literature (19th & 20th Centuries)
   Examiner: Sarah Hammerschlag

   Herder, “Treatise on the origins of Language” in Philosophical Writings
   Schlegel, Fragments
Hegel, *Lectures on Aesthetics*
Kierkegaard, *Concept of Irony, or Either/Or*
Wordsworth, “Preface to Lyrical Ballads”
Mallarmé “Crisis of Verse”
Valery, Paul, “Poetry and Abstract thought”

[For the 20th Century works that follow, student will choose three subsections on which to focus.]

**20th Century classics in Religion and Literature**
T.S. Eliot “Religion and Literature”
James, Henry, *Art of Fiction*
Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism*
Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*
Auerbach, *Mimesis*
Wallace Stevens, “The Necessary Angel”
Nathan Scott, *Negative Capability* or *The Broken Center*
George Steiner, *Real Presences*

**Structuralism**
Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*
Bakhtin *Dialogical Imagination*
Levi-Strauss, “Myth and Meaning,”
Barthes, *Mythologies*

**Psychoanalysis**
Freud, “The Uncanny,” “Creative Writers and Daydreaming”
Lacan “The Mirror Stage,” “The agency of the letter in the Unconscious or Reason since Freud,”
*Irigary, The Sex which is not One, Speculum of the Other Woman*
Abrams, Nicolas, *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis*

**Marxism/Materialists**
Benjamin, “On language as such and the language of Man”
“Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”
Lukacs, *Theory of the Novel*
Williams, *Marxism and Literature*
Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*
Ranciere, *Disagreement or Aesthetics and its Discontents*

**Phenomenology/Hermeneutics, Post-Structuralism**
Bataille, *Inner Experience*
Sartre, *What is Literature?*
Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*
Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*
Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, Time and Narrative*
Blanchot, “Literature and the Right to Death” and other essays in consultation.
Barthes, Roland, *Writing Degree Zero*, “Death of the Author”
Derrida, *Of Grammatology* or
   “Force & Signification”
   “Structure, Sign & Play”
   “Literature in Secret”
Foucault, “What is an Author”
Paul DeMan *Aesthetic Ideology* or *Allegories of Reading*
Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *The Literary Absolute*

**Identity and Politics (Gender/Race/Post-colonial criticism)**
DuBois, *Souls of Blackfolks*
Butler, *Gender Trouble*
Sedgewick, Eve, *Tendencies*
Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other*
Spivak, “Can the subaltern speak”

**C. Theory of Visual Images**
   Examiner: Karin Krause

Plato, *Republic* 10; *Phaedrus* 275d
Aristotle, *Poetics* I-III
Plutarch, *Moralia* IV, 345-348
Tertullian, *On Idolatry*
Eusebius, *Letter to Constantia*
Epiphanius of Salamis, *Letter to the Emperor Theodosius*
Gregory of Nyssa, *Homily on Theodore the Recruit*
Horos of the Iconoclastic Synod of Hiereia
John of Damascus, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*
Acts of the Seventh Ecumenical Council (The Second Council of Nicaea)
Theodore the Studite, *On the Holy Icons (Antirrhetics); Seven Chapters against the Iconoclasts; Letter to Plato*
Patriarch Nikephorus, *Antirrhetics*
The *Synodikon of Orthodoxy*
Photius, *An Image of the Virgin in St. Sophia (Homily 17)*
Michael Psellus, *Homily on the Crucifixion*
Eustratius of Nicaea, *Dialogue; Demonstration*
Dionysius of Fourna, *The ‘Painter's Manual’*
RLVC Examination 2: Genres of Literature and Case Studies

This examination is designed to test the student's ability in the interpretation of works of art. Twelve to fifteen texts are to be selected, representing either two genres that may embrace traditional literary categories (e.g. comedy, tragedy, lyric poetry, epic, romance, and the novel), visual cultural practices such as film and painting, etc or a genre and a case study. If the student chooses a case study, the exam should be circumscribed to reflect a historical or formal problem, a specific author, or a literary trope. The bibliographies for the selected genres should ensure substantial coverage of each form or case, and enable comparison between them. The exam also offers students the opportunity to think critically about genre and canon formation itself.

In some cases, the number of texts diverges from the stipulated norm due to these considerations: so, e.g., two texts normally suffice for the genre of epic, while for lyric poetry a substantial group of lyrics constitutes the equivalent of a book.

Below are some examples of possible RLVC 2 exams:

**Genre: The Modern Novel**
Examiner: Richard Rosengarten

Required Texts

Cervantes, *Don Quixote*
Richardson, *Pamela*
Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*
Joyce, *Ulysses*

Exemplary Texts from a National Tradition

(America)

Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*
Melville, *Moby-Dick*
Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*
James, *Wings of the Dove or The Ambassadors*
Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*
Ellison, *Invisible Man*
O’Connor, *The Violent Bear It Away*
Spiegelman, *Maus*

(England)

Behn, *Oroonko*
Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe or Moll Flanders or Roxana*
Richardson, *Pamela or Clarissa*
Fielding, *Joseph Andrews or Tom Jones*
Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* or *Emma*
Eliot, *Middlemarch* or *Daniel Deronda*
Dickens, *Great Expectations* or *Bleak House*
Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*
Joyce, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

**Genre: Tragedy**
Examiner: Richard Rosengarten

**Ancient Greece**
One text each from Sophocles, Aeschylus, and Euripides

**Renaissance England**
Two texts from Shakespeare; two others from Marlowe, Webster, etc.

**Late 19th/20th Century Europe**
One text each from Ibsen, Synge, Beckett, Brecht

**Genre: Aphorisms and Fragments**
Examiner: Sarah Hammerschlag

**Hebrew Bible:** *Ecclesiastes, Book of Proverbs*
Heraclitus, *Fragments*
Pascal, *Pensées*

Adorno, T., *Minima Moralia*
Bataille, G., *Inner Experience*
Benjamin, W., *Arcades Project,* “Theses on the Philosophy of History”
Blanchot M., *Writing the Disaster*
Derrida, “Faith and Knowledge”
Jabès, E., *Le Livre des Questions (The Book of Questions)*
Kafka, F., *Die Zürauer Aphorismen*
Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*
Nietzsche F., *Twilight of the Idols,* *Human all too Human*
Novalis, *Philosophical Writings*
Schlegel F., *Philosophical Fragments*
Weil, S. *Gravity and Grace*
Wilde, O., *Epigrams and Aphorisms*

*Theory of the Fragment:*
Lacoue-Labarthe, P., *The Literary Absolute: The theory of literature in German Romanticism*
Lyotard, J-F., “The Postmodern Condition,” The Differend

Case Study: Holocaust Memory in Postwar Literature
Examiner: Sarah Hammerschlag

Levi, P., *Drowned and the Saved* and *Survival in Auschwitz*
Wiesel, E., *Night*
Amery, J., *At the Mind’s Limit*
Rajchman, C., *The Last Jew of Treblinka: A Memoir*
Antelme, R., *L’espèce humaine*
Blanchot, M., *Writing the Disaster*
Ozick, C. *The Shawl*
Perec, G., *W or the Memory of Childhood*
Kofman, S., *Rue Ordener, Rue Labat*
Modiano, P., *Dora Bruder*
Spiegelman, A., *Maus*
Sebald, W.G. *Austerlitz*
Paul Celan
Nelly Sachs

A Few Secondary Sources:

Genre: Icons
Examiner: Karin Krause

**Bibliography**


**Visual Resources, Exhibition Catalogs (etc.) for Consultation**


(Online:)
- Visual Resources Center, Uchicago (LUNA, ARTSTOR): [https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/vrc/](https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/vrc/)


- Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Resources: [http://www.doaks.org/resources](http://www.doaks.org/resources)

**Selected Reference Works for Consultation:**


**Genre: Ekphrasis: General Literature**

Examiner: Jas Elsner


G. Boehm and H. Pfotenhauer (eds. 1995), *Beschreibungskunst-Kunstbeschreibung*, Munich


M. Krieger (1991), *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign*, Baltimore


*Classical Philology* 102 (2007)


*Word and Image* 15.1 (1999)

Ancient Theory:

Defining ekphrasis: The *Progymnasmata*

Texts:

Aelius Theon *Progymnasmata* (ed. M. Patillon, Paris, 1997), 118.6-120 (pp. 66-9);
‘Hermogenes’ *Progymnasmata* (ed. H. Rabe, Leipzig, 1913), 10.47-50 (pp.22-3);

Translations:

G. Kennedy, *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric*, Atlanta, 2003

Reading:

S. Bartsch (1989), *Decoding the Ancient Novel*, Princeton, 7-10

Greek Epic
   Translations: Use Rieu or Lattimore, but glance at Pope and Lang, Leaf and Myers.
   Reading:
   O. Taplin (1980), ‘The Shield of Achilles within the Iliad’ *Greece and Rome* 27,1-21

b. Hesiod, *Aspis*
   Text and Translation: Use the Loeb
   Reading:
   R. Lamberton (1988), *Hesiod*, New Haven, 141-4

Roman Epic:
a. Catullus 64
   Translations: Use Lee or Mitchie or the NEW Loeb
   Reading:
   W. Fitzgerald, *Catullan Provocations*, Berkeley, 1995, 140-68

b. Vergil *Aeneid*
   Translations: Use Jackson Knight or West, but look at Dryden and Day Lewis
   Reading: e.g.
   Elsner (2007) 78-87
c. Ovid:

*Metamorphoses*: 2.1-18; 6.70-128; 13.685-701. Use the Loeb

Reading:

P. Hardie (2002), Ovid’s Poetics of Illusion, Cambridge, 173-93
Heffernan (1993) 46-83

Drama:

Euripides *Ion*

Translations: Use the NEW Loeb

Reading:

F. Zeitlin (1989), ‘Mysteries of Identity and Designs of the Self in Euripides’ *Ion* *PCPS* 35, 144-97
K. Zacharia (2003), *Converging Truths: Euripides*’ *Ion* and the Athenian Quest for Self-Definition, Leiden
V. Pedrick (2007) *Euripides, Freud, and the Romance of Belonging*, Baltimore,

Epigram:

Self-Standing Ekphrasis: epigram

a. General: e.g. Myron’s Cow

Text and Translations: Myron’s Cow see *Greek Anthology* IX.713-42, 793-8, to which Posidippus 66 must now be added – with the Loeb

Reading:


The New Posidippus
Text and translation: Use C. Austin and G. Bastianini (eds.) (2002), Posidippi quae supersunt omnia, Milan
Reading:

Essays in

Greek Prose:
Lucian:
Zeuxis (Loeb 6)
The Hall (Loeb 1) with
Z. Newby (2004), Testing the Boundaries of Ekphrasis: Lucian’s On the Hall Ramus 31
Heracles (Loeb 1) with
Elsner (2007) 49-66
Essays in Portraiture (Loeb 4) with
Goldhill (2001) 184-93

The Ancient Novel:
Texts: Read the proem of Longus, Daphnis and Chloe and as much as you can of Achilles Tatius and Heliodorus. The most handy collection is B.P. Reardon, The Collected Ancient Greek Novels, but some are in the Loeb and OUP has a good Achilles Tatius translated by Whitmarsh. Also Apuleius’ Metamorphoses, translated by R. Graves
Reading:
Bartsch (1989)
A. Laird, (1997), ‘Description and Divinity in Apuleius’ Metamorphoses’ Groningen Colloquia on the Novel 8, 59-86

Philostratus the Elder

Text: The Loeb edition is adequate: Read it all!

Reading:

Exegesis and Ekphrasis:

Texts: Lucian, Slander (Loeb 1)
Prudentius Peristephanon 9 (Loeb), with
Petronius Satyricon 82-91 (tr. Sullivan or Branham) with
N. Slater, Reading Petronius, Baltimore, 1990, 220-30
Lucian’ *Amores* (Loeb 8)


