

CORNELL UNIVERSITY

Graduate Field of Romance Studies

Hispanic Literatures and Cultures

GUIDE FOR STUDENTS AND CHAIRPERSONS OF SPECIAL COMMITTEES

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**I. I. Objectives of the Romance Studies Graduate Plan**

- A. A. To make full use of the Special Committee system, one of Cornell's singular features in graduate education. At Cornell, the graduate student's work is directed not by his or her department as such, but by a committee of faculty members chosen by the student.
- A. B. To allow for a broad experience in literary history and criticism and to avoid premature specialization. The student of recent literature should acquire an ample and precise sense of cultural traditions; likewise, the student of earlier periods and authors. The General Examination is intended to ensure thorough preparation in Hispanic literatures and cultures.
- A. C. To provide students with adequate opportunity for independent reading and study. Students may arrange to take Directed Reading courses with faculty members in order to fill gaps in their preparation and to refine thesis topics. Such courses are designed to make the dissertation a natural outgrowth of work in the degree program.

**A. II. First Days at Cornell**

- B. A. New students should study the provisions of this Guide carefully before registration. During registration week, the Director of Graduate Studies holds a meeting to answer new student's questions and to facilitate the choice of a special

committee. At registration and during the early weeks of the term, the Director of Graduate Studies and other members of the department hold extra office hours in order to advise and assist new and continuing students.

- A. B. There is also a purely social occasion to welcome new students and allow them to meet faculty members and continuing students in a relaxed atmosphere.

**A. III. The Special Committee and the Student's Program**

- B. A. Each doctoral student chooses, by the end of the first semester, a chair of their Special Committee and must have by the end of the third semester, a three-member Special committee consisting of a chairperson and two other faculty members. M.A. candidates need have only two members on their committees. The Committee is the unit directly responsible for the student's progress in his or her work. It is the student's responsibility to consult regularly with the members of the committee regarding choice of courses, preparation for examinations, and other pertinent matters. Students are free to reconstitute the committee as their special interests crystallize and their contacts with faculty members increase.

According to Graduate School regulations, at least one member of the Special Committee of each M.A. and Ph.D. candidate must represent an area of concentration other than that of the student's major. Most doctoral students choose only one minor subject, though Graduate School regulations allow the election of two, in which case two of the committee members represent areas of concentration other than Hispanic literatures and cultures.

- A. B. Students engage in a flexible course of study based on individual needs and experience rather than on general Field requirements. As students advance in their programs, their Special committees will recommend that they study those related disciplines and languages necessary to further work in their individually defined fields of study. Students may define those fields in broad terms. They are encouraged to relate their fields of interest to other disciplines, such as anthropology, comparative literature, history, linguistics, music, or philosophy, to name only a few.

**A. IV. Study Areas**

The discipline of Hispanic literatures and cultures at Cornell is divided into the following areas:

- Middle Ages
- Golden Age
- Modern Peninsular (1700-Present)
- Colonial Latin American
- Modern – Avant Gardes
- Contemporary Latin American and Latino/a

It is the responsibility of the individual student to become acquainted with each of these areas and the patterns of generic development and literary history that tie them together.

• **V. Language Skills and Pedagogical Training**

- B. A. Students are expected to speak and write Spanish fluently and accurately. While the Graduate School has no formal requirements regarding proficiency in other foreign languages, students are encouraged to learn other languages that are essential in literary research concerning Spanish texts. The need and nature of such linguistic competence is determined in consultation with the student's Special Committee.
- A. B. For their preparation as future teachers, students are required to take the program's language methodology course in their first year in the graduate program, before teaching any of the program's language courses. In addition, students who will teach literature are required to take the First Year Writing Program's "Teaching Writing" course either during the summer before, or in the fall, concurrently with, teaching their first literature/culture course.

**A. VI. The Ph.D. Program**

B. A. Length

Graduate School regulations require three years of residence for the Ph.D. degree. Ph.D. candidates entering with an M.A. or equivalent study generally take four years; students entering with a B.A. are normally expected to complete their degree in five years. A sixth year may be funded in certain cases where the need for extended time arises, the student's committee approves, and funds are available.

A. B. The First T Years

During the first two years, students should plan a full program of courses in their major and minor fields. The normal is four courses per semester during the first year, and three for those holding teaching assistantships, beginning their second year. In this two-year period, all students are required to take one designated 6000-level seminar in Hispanic literature per semester until they complete their Q exams at the end of their second year (4 seminars in total). For the third year, students should take courses (1-2) that develop their area of specialization and help them begin work towards the dissertation. Students are expected to emphasize diversity and avoid duplication of past work. In the summer following the first year, students are encouraged to pursue related language study and/or independent readings.

The balance of courses, independent study, and thesis work in the year is decided upon by the student with consultation with the Special Committee. Every student should have taken at least fourteen courses by the end of the third year. Any grades of Incomplete that a student has received must be made up, as well as any language requirements, before he or she will be permitted to take the A Examination.

A. C. The Fourth/Fifth Years

The remaining time in the student's program is devoted to research and the writing of the dissertation.

**A. VII. General examination (Q exam)**

There is a canonical reading list for each area. All students must prepare to be examined on these lists. Students may choose to prepare taking courses in those areas that they have had

least exposure to, or they may chose to prepare on their own on top of their coursework. Students will be examined on all areas, except for their area of specialization, which will be evaluated in the A exam later in the program. If a student has chosen to specialize in more than one are, s/he will chose one to be exempted from the examination.

- A. A. The General Examination is designed to test students' overall familiarity with Hispanic cultural and literary traditions as well as their synthetic and critical abilities. It is based on the Ph.D. Reading List and tests both coverage of a modicum of canonical texts and acquaintance with diverse methodologies of reading.
- A. B. Students take a single written examination that will be given in April of each year. All students will take this examination in their fourth semester, at the end of their second year at Cornell.
- A. C. The General Examination will consist of five area exams (a number which excludes the area of specialization), each of two hours' length, administered over a two-day period. Students are encouraged to use some of this time to think carefully about how best to organize their ideas before writing answers.
- A. D. The Examination Committee, appointed annually by the Chair of the Department to serve for the academic year (June-July), consists of three members of the Hispanic faculty, one of whom serves as the Chair. Since the Examination Committee writes questions presented at the exam, students may wish to consult with members of this committee – in addition to the area specialists – in order to obtain guidelines that will help them prepare for the test. Such meetings should be requested by the student early in the semester prior to the scheduled exam date. It is the Examination Committee's responsibility to prepare and evaluate the General Examination. The faculty will provide, at the time of examination, two questions per area. Students may answer either of the two questions. All area questions should be answered in Spanish.
- A. E. After completion of the various parts of the examination, each of the three members of the examination committee will read the examination within one week of its receipt, and the student will be advised of the results within two weeks of the date of the last examination. In special circumstances where a delay is warranted – for example, faculty absences from campus – the student will be so informed.
- A. F. The General Examination will be read and evaluated by all members of the Examination committee. The Chair of the committee will report the results of the examination in writing to the Director of Graduate Studies and to the Chair of the student's Special Committee (if that person is not also a member of the Examination Committee). One copy of the final report will be sent to the student, and one copy will be kept in a confidential file in the Department along with the examination itself.

- A. G. The General Examination may be passed in its entirety, failed in its entirety, or passed conditionally with a deficiency. In case of failure, a fresh examination must be passed within one semester. A third retake of the full examination is not permitted. In the case of a conditional pass, the deficiency or deficiencies must be made up within one semester. The deficiency will be made up through further reading and testing, as determined by the committee and communicated to the student by the Chair of the committee in consultation with the student. Students are encouraged to discuss informally the results of the examination with the members of the committee and, in the case of a deficiency, to discuss make-up work with committee members responsible for the area(s) in which the deficiency was incurred, but only those decisions voted on and agreed by the full committee in concert are binding on the student and on the committee.

## **PROCEDURES**

Files of past exams will remain open and available to students for consultation. Exams will be handwritten during the two-hour exam period. No computers will be allowed.

Exams will be held in morning sessions over two days within a week of each other (e.g. for a student specializing in Latino: Saturday: Middle Ages, Golden Age and Peninsular; next Saturday: Colonial, Modern-Avant Gardes, Contemporary Latin American and Latino. For a student specializing in Golden Age: Saturday: Middle Ages and Peninsular; next Saturday: Colonial, Modern-Avant Gardes, Contemporary Latin American and Latino) A faculty member will pick up the exams from the students at the end of each exam period.

### **A. VIII. Admission to Candidacy Examination (A exam)**

- i. i. Students in Romance Studies take the A exam (Admission to Candidacy Examination) after having completed the General Examination, the required coursework, and any language requirements determined by the Special Committee. They are required by the Graduate School to attempt this second part of the Admission to Candidacy Examination before registering for the seventh semester. The student may wish to schedule this exam within one semester of the General Examination (Q exam), otherwise the A exam will be scheduled in May, at the end of the third year.
- i. ii. The A Examination is an oral exam, which usually does not exceed two hours, involving the student and his or her special committee. It is based on a prospectus of the dissertation as well as an extended piece of written work presented to the Special committee, ordinarily a paper intended to serve as a section of the dissertation. This examination is also designed to test the student's competence in his or her area of specialization. Since a student's course of study may include disciplines beyond one national literature, the area of specialization is also defined with flexibility. Students may specialize in one of the traditional areas (see above, Section IV), or they may choose a

subject spanning several periods. They may include related material from other cultural and linguistic regions and may choose to work across several periods of literary history or within a single period. The area of specialization may also involve any combination of Peninsular, Spanish-American, and Latino/a literature and culture (e.g., Hispanic prose of the Renaissance, modern Hispanic poetry, etc).

- i. iii. Students will have defined an area of specialization and ideas for the dissertation well in advance of the A Examination in consultation with the Special Committee. Students should plan to spend at least a fourth of their time over one semester in preparation of the prospectus and A paper, and should meet frequently with their chairs as they define the topic, prepare an outline, and write. The prospectus and paper should not be a rough first draft but a revised piece of work, complete with bibliography and such scholarly apparatus as may be appropriate. Length of A papers is varied, but most are thirty to fifty pages long. The complete prospectus and paper should be made available to all members of the Special Committee at least two weeks prior to the date agreed upon for the examination. In the examination itself, the members of the Special Committee question the candidate on the worth and coherence of his or her topic. Students who pass the examination can expect to receive recommendations from committee members for further work on the dissertation. In the event of failure, the student may be allowed to repeat the examination once on the recommendation of the Special Committee.

**i. IX. The Ph.D. Dissertation and the Thesis Defense (B exam)**

- B. A. An acceptable dissertation is one that satisfies the members of the Special Committee and meets the formal requirements of the Graduate School. Students should acquaint themselves with Graduate School regulations and, above all, stay in close touch with the members of their committee at every stage of reading and writing. The Graduate School requires that doctoral dissertations be written in English.
- A. B. The B Examination is the defense of the dissertation. Each member of the special committee usually presents to the candidate a brief written judgment and the critique of the dissertation and a checklist of errors to be corrected. The chief aims of the examination are to ensure the candidate that the dissertation has been carefully read and considered and to allow the student to engage in serious discussion of his or her work.

**A. X. The Master's Degree**

- B. A. In addition to admitting students directly into the Ph.D. program, the Field of Romance Studies occasionally accepts students who are seeking only an M.A. or an M.A. within the Ph.D. program. Moreover, by the end of the first study, a doctoral student's Special Committee may require him or her to complete an M.A. if, in the Committee's opinion, the student needs the special research training provided by the M.A. before embarking on a Ph.D. thesis. A complete draft of the

thesis for this required M.A. should be in the hands of the student's Committee by the end of the student's third semester at Cornell.

A. B. The requirements for the M.A. include two semesters of full-time course work, the writing of an M.A. thesis, and an oral examination of about one-hour. Students entering with a B.A. can usually complete these requirements in two semesters plus a summer (or third semester) for the writing of the thesis. The M.A. thesis is a paper of some forty or fifty pages and is often an expanded version of a paper written for a course or seminar.

A. C. Students may apply for admission to the Ph.D. program after completing an M.A.; and Ph.D. candidates may, at their own option, request conferral of the M.A. upon successful completion of the Special Field Examination (which is considered equivalent to the M.A. thesis).

**A. XI. Teaching Assistantships and Financial Aid**

B. A. The Field considers that the experience of classroom teaching, with adequate advice, assistance, and supervision, is an essential art of the graduate education. Documentary evidence of such experience (evaluations, letters of recommendation) is indispensable for new Ph.D.'s applying for teaching jobs. The Field makes every effort to have all Ph.D. candidates teach for at least one year in Spanish language and one year in Hispanic literature and culture.

A. B. The normal duration of financial support from fellowships and/or teaching assistantships is five years.