

Comprehensive Examinations (HIST 5960): Policies and Guidelines (approved 4/23/21)

Exam format: Exams will consist of three to six essays based on historiographic, historical, or pedagogic topics and reading lists pre-approved by the student's examiners. Reading lists will vary in length but will include a range of monographs, peer-reviewed articles, and/or primary sources. Individual essays will also vary in length, but a benchmark for the combined length one-inch margins; no exam essay may be shorter than 10 typed, double-spaced pages, or longer than 25 typed, double-spaced pages. Because the details of exam format, like the reading lists, are set and approved by the specific examiners with whom the student is working, students should talk to potential examiners early. Most faculty require working with students at least one semester before the semester of the exams.

For the Depth Track (major and minor field): 2/3 of the exam will cover the major field, and 1/3 will cover the minor field. For example, a student might receive approval from the major-field examiners to write four 12.5-page essays in the major field, and approval from a minor-field examiner to write two 12.5-page essays in the minor field. Another student might receive approval to write one 25-page essay and two 12.5-page essays in the major field, and one 25-page essay in the minor field.

For the Global/Comparative History track: Students will write essays focusing on three different geographic regions from among the fields in which they have taken 5000-level seminar. The essay topics should be comparative, thematic and /or global, and each of the three geographic regions should be covered equally. For example, a student may receive permission to write three 25-page essays each examining the history of gender and sexuality in a different geographic region. Another student might receive approval to write a 25-page essay on labor in modern world history focused on all three regions, a second 25-page essay on the comparative social history of women in all three regions, and two shorter essays (12.5 pages each) on cultural and commercial networks linking the three regions during the early-modern period.

Examiners (Comprehensive Examinations Committee): It is the student's responsibility to secure the approval of between three and five faculty members to serve as examiners. An appropriate examiner is a faculty member with whom the student has taken at least one 5000-level seminar or directed study in the field to be examined. Faculty members are not required to serve as examiners; and the examiners have final say in approving the reading lists as well as the format and topics of the essays in the fields they will be examining. Early communication and preparation with committee members at least one full semester before the student plans to register for comprehensive examinations is strongly encouraged.

For the Depth Track: The student is required to have two or three examiners for the major field, and one or two examiners for the minor field. In cases where two examiners are not available for the major field, the one examiner for the field will work with the student to identify and secure an appropriate second examiner, who may be one of the minor field examiners so long as the entire committee consists of at least three examiners.

For the Global/Comparative History Track: The student is required to have one examiner from each of the three fields being covered. The committee may be expanded to include one or two additional examiners in the fields to be covered, but the total number of examiners may not exceed five.

Timeline for Examinations

1. The student must submit a completed Comprehensive Examinations application from to the History Department office to be able to register for HIST 5960 by the end of week one of the semester in which the student is taking the exams. The completed form identifies the faculty members who will constitute the committee, confirms that the composition of this committee meets the requirements listed above, and is signed by all the members of the committee to verify they have agreed to serve as the student's examiners.
2. All topics and reading lists must be approved by the appropriate examiner(s) no later than week one of the semester in which the student registers for HIST 5960. Failure to meet this deadlines may result in faculty dropping student from taking the exams that semester. Students are strongly encouraged to begin the preparation process prior to the semester in which they will be enrolled in HIST 5960
3. Expectations as to the format and structure for each essay (e.g. question or thesis; outline/format; projected length) should be finalized between the student and the examiners no later than Monday of the week five of the semester. Failure by the student or the examiner to meet this deadline will require students to withdraw from HIST 5960. Students who fail to complete the exams and do not withdraw from HIST 5960 before the "W" deadline will receive a grade of no credit (NC) on their transcripts.
4. Students may consult with their examiners up to but **no later than the Monday of week 14** of the semester.
5. The student has **until 12 noon on the Wednesday of week 14** of the semester to submit answers via e-mail or hard copy (typed) to the History Department Office/staff. Faculty may require students to submit their answers also to Turnitin.com
6. If a student fails the comprehensive examinations, she or he will have one opportunity to retake the exam unless failure is a result of a violation of the University's academic honesty policy, in which case they may not be retaken and the student will be dis-enrolled from the M.A. program without receiving the M.A. degree.
7. A student retakes the comprehensive examinations by registering again for HIST 5960 in a subsequent semester. The student will be retested only in the field or fields failed. However, if a student fails one or more fields a second time, she or he will receive a second "NC" for HIST 5960 and be dis-enrolled from the M.A. program without receiving the M.A. degree.