
New York University

Department of English

Ph.D. Handbook

Fall 2019

Contains information on:

Course and Distribution Requirements
Doctoral Examination
Dissertation Proposals
Foreign Language Requirement
Teaching Preparation

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Course Levels

The Graduate Program consists of 1000, 2000, and 3000 level courses.

1000-Introductory graduate courses. Open to MA and PhD students and to upper-level undergraduates with permission of the instructor. These courses will serve as introductions to periods, genres, or theoretical approaches. They are designed to provide students with the opportunity to study periods, genres, or theoretical approaches in which they have done little or no prior work.

2000 and 3000 Graduate Seminars. Open to MA and PhD students. These courses offer opportunities for more advanced work in periods, genres, or theoretical approaches.

ENGL-GA 3006: Ph.D. Proseminar: Studies in Advanced Literary Research. The Ph.D. Proseminar is required of all doctoral students in the fall semester of their first year. The course will introduce the process of formulating and executing advanced research project in literature. It will do so by way of actual case studies in which department faculty present their current or recent research, either directly or through associated materials.

Funding and Time to Degree

The English PhD program is designed to be completed within the term of the full-funding MacCracken award (typically five years). By following the Department's recommendation and teaching for a total of four semesters during the MacCracken term (see "Teacher Preparation" section), and opting to fully participate in the MacCracken Reserve Program, students can provide themselves an additional year of full funding in case they require a sixth year of matriculation in order to secure employment and complete the degree. Students are also encouraged to seek completion grants from other sources, such as the ACLS and the NYU Center for the Humanities. Regardless of funding, the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences sets a limit of ten years to complete the Ph.D., or seven years for students who have transferred 24 credits or more to NYU.

To facilitate academic publishing by graduate students, the English Department offers modest funding for support in securing permissions in relation to articles accepted for publication in peer-reviewed journals or edited scholarly volumes. To request such funding, a student should contact the Director of Graduate Studies and provide proof of acceptance for publication.

Course Distribution and Requirements

Requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in English and American literature include the completion of 72 credits and the following specific requirements:

1. Coursework in the first two years

- Ph.D. Proseminar (4 credits. To be taken in the fall term of the first year)
- Elective courses and directed reading. [44 credits total]

At least one course must focus primarily on a historical period prior to 1800 and another must focus primarily on a period after 1800

2. Doctoral Examination

- 4-credit Guided Research (Engl-GA.3002 in preparation for Doctoral Examination. [4 credits]
- Doctoral Examination, based on two individualized reading lists covering two fields (one of which is designated the major field, and the other the minor field). The examination fields are: medieval; Renaissance; 18th-century British; Romantic; 19th-century British; 20th-century British; American: beginning to 1865; American: 1865 to present; African American literature; colonial and postcolonial studies; literature of the Americas; transatlantic studies; critical theory; modern drama and ethnic American literature(s). The written examination is supervised by a committee of two faculty members chosen by the student.

3. Preparation and Defense of Dissertation Proposal

- A 4-credit *Dissertation Seminar I* (Engl-GA.3972), which entails preparing for and the preliminary drafting of the Dissertation Proposal. While enrolled in this course, students should work closely with the faculty member who will direct their dissertation, as well as two additional faculty members who together will form the dissertation committee, to prepare the proposal. As part of this process students will complete a literature review based on a topic bibliography.
- The dissertation director must be a member of the department.
- A 4-credit *Dissertation Seminar II* (Engl-GA.3981), which entails an oral defense of the Dissertation Proposal before the student's dissertation committee. After the completion of the defense, when the proposal is officially approved and the subject of the dissertation formally registered with the department, the student may begin initial work on the dissertation proper. [4 credits]

4. Professional Training

- A 4-credit Pedagogy Seminar (Engl-GA..3985), taken during the first Semester of the third year. [4-credits]
- A 4-credit Workshop on Professional Practices (Engl-GA..3980), taken in the spring of the third year. [4-credits]

5. Language proficiency beyond the English language

- This requirement may be satisfied either before or after matriculation at NYU by demonstrating either (a) proficiency in one language by completing the sixth term of an acceptable college language course with a grade of B or better or by passing a language examination at a comparable level of proficiency or (b) proficiency in two languages by completing the equivalent of four semesters of acceptable college work with a grade of B or better. The final course or examination establishing proficiency must have been completed no more than two years prior to matriculation in the PhD program. The language(s) offered must be relevant to the dissertation research and scholarly practice in the field in which the student intends to work, and the department reserves the right to require a particular language on these grounds. Any student whose first language is not English should see the Director of Graduate Studies to discuss the use of their language to fulfill (or partially fulfill) the requirement. All language requirements must be completed by the end of the third year in the program.

6. Incompletes

- The English Department does not permit instructors to assign "Incomplete" as the grade for a graduate course. If extenuating circumstances prevent a student from completing his or her coursework for a grade in a timely manner, the student should contact the Director of Graduate Studies to make arrangements. Only requests having to do with exceptional conditions (e.g., prolonged illness, etc.) will be considered.

Course Distribution and Requirements cont'd

7. A completed dissertation and oral defense of the dissertation

- Course credits for directed research and writing (Engl-GA. 3002) [4 credits]
The dissertation must be approved for defense by the director and core committee before the examination is convened. Some revision, including the mandatory correction of any errors, may be required as a result of the defense. The examining board consists of five members of the graduate faculty, the core committee plus two additional committee members. The examination lasts for 90 minutes. If the candidate fails the oral defense of the dissertation, a second examination is permitted, resulting either in a pass or in termination from the PhD program

8. Transfer Credit

- A student must apply for transfer credit, for courses taken prior to admission, within the first academic year of attendance as a matriculated student. For doctoral students, when a prior graduate program is comparable to that of the department's master's program requirements, blanket credit equal to the number of credits required for the departmental master's will be awarded. Otherwise each course will be considered separately for transfer credit up to a maximum of 40 points. If courses are transferred individually, credits will be transferred point for point (e.g., if transfer is requested for a three-credit course at another institution, then only a maximum of three credits will be granted by NYU) up to the maximum amount allowed. Transfer of credit for individual courses older than ten years for master's students and fifteen years for doctoral students will not be allowed.

9. Inter-University Doctoral Consortium (IUDC)

- The IUDC is open to doctoral students from participating schools who have completed at least one year of full time study toward the Ph.D. Only courses offered and conducted during either the fall or spring term may be applied for.
- Participating schools are:
Columbia University, GSAS
Princeton University - The Graduate School
CUNY Graduate Center
Rutgers University
Fordham University, GSAS
Stony Brook University
Graduate Faculty, New School University
Teachers College, Columbia University
New York University, GSAS, Steinhardt

- Complete the [Inter-University Doctoral Consortium Registration Form](#)

For further questions, please contact NYU consortium office
Li Cao, Assistant Director, Academic Affairs
gsas.consortium@nyu.edu
New York University
6 Washington Square North, 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10003
Phone: (212) 998-3716
[NYU IUDC Website](#)

Teaching Preparation

- 1.** While teaching is not required as a condition of the Graduate School's MacCracken Award, the English Department still sees teaching as crucial to the professional development of its doctoral candidates. We therefore recommend that our PhD students teach for four semesters starting after the second year of study, typically scheduled across the third through fifth years.
- 2.** Teaching opportunities primarily include serving as a recitation leader in general education courses in the undergraduate college, and in the departmental undergraduate historical survey series: Literatures in English I, II, III, and IV (ENGL-UA 111, ENGL-UA 112, ENGL-UA 113, ENGL-UA 114, respectively). Students who follow the department's recommendation for teaching will be assigned to a range of different courses over their four semesters of service, and can thereby achieve an acceptable level of knowledge across the discipline. Students who forgo teaching may be required to demonstrate the breadth of their literary-historical knowledge through a departmentally-administered examination (distinct from the Doctoral Exams).
- 3.** In addition to enrolling in the department's Pedagogy Seminar in the fall of the third year, all recitation leaders teaching with a departmental faculty member will be required to meet regularly with the lecturer for instruction in all aspects of pedagogy: presentation of content, techniques for leading discussion, assignments, and grading.
- 4.** After serving as a recitation leader for at least two semesters, students will whenever possible be considered for assignment to teach a course for which they are fully responsible. The primary opportunities in this regard are the summer session versions of the intermediate departmental courses offered in the undergraduate major.

Doctoral Examination

The Doctoral Exam is the context in which students entering their third year demonstrate:

- Thorough knowledge of both the representative principal texts and the principal critical issues within a designated *major field* of specialization.
- Substantial familiarity with key primary and secondary texts of a designated *minor field*.

The Doctoral Exam is the context in which students demonstrate broad knowledge of a *major* and *minor* field of English and American literature. *Both major and minor fields should be selected from the following categories.* These categories are meant to be general, and correspond generally with the conventional historical designations in which our students are likely to teach in lower division undergraduate courses. Within these periods, various emphases and adjustments [the “long 18th century,” for example, or “Victorian literature”] are possible.

- **Medieval English Literature**
- **Renaissance English Literature**
- **Eighteenth-Century British Literature**
- **Romantic literature**
- **Nineteenth-Century British Literature**
- **Colonial and Postcolonial Studies**
- **Literature of the Americas**
- **Twentieth-Century British Literature**
- **Early American Literature (to roughly 1865)**
- **Modern American Literature (from roughly 1865 to the present)**
- **Modern Drama**
- **African American Literature**
- **Transatlantic Studies**
- **Ethnic American Literature(s)**
- **Critical Theory**

Doctoral Examination cont'd

The major and minor examination fields are centered on reading lists drawn up by the student in conjunction with faculty examiners, according to the following standards:

- For the major field list, approximately 25 primary items (i.e., recognized literary texts from within the designated field) and about 10 secondary items (i.e., instances of influential scholarly work in the field that are still informing discussion among specialists, augmented by a few basic literary histories of the period or useful theoretical works originating beyond the discipline of literary studies).
- For the minor field list, approximately 20 primary items and 5 secondary items.
- The examiners should be drawn from the regular and affiliated members of the Department.

Both lists must be approved by the two faculty examiners and submitted to the office of the Director of Graduate Studies no later than April 1 of the spring term of the second year.

Through the spring and summer of the second year, students prepare for the Doctoral Exam by reviewing the materials on their reading lists and consulting with their faculty examiners as all parties agree is appropriate. The exam-preparation period culminates in the writing of two exam essays in response to questions drafted by the two examiners.

Doctoral Examination cont'd

The Exam: Occurs over the course of one calendar week, a Friday-to-Friday period preceding the beginning of fall semester classes. This writing proceeds under take-home, open-book conditions, with the exam for each field requiring the student to discuss **at least four texts** from the relevant reading list. Prior to taking the exam, students will be provided with a blank template of the grading rubric to be used by faculty in assessing the exams.

Each exam essay must conform to stipulated word-length guidelines—3,000-4,000 words for the major field exam; 2,500-3,000 words for the minor field exam. While the essays may address materials in addition to the four listed items that they *must* discuss, and engaged texts not on students' official exam bibliographies, examiners may not ask students to account for works that do not appear on the approved exam lists *unless* they provide the relevant reference material within the exam question itself. By and large, the shape of the questions should be dictated by the character of the lists themselves. Typically, each examiner provides the student with three questions from which to select the one addressed in the exam essay, and while this is not absolutely necessary, in cases where options are not given the question that is presented should be crafted so as to allow the student maximum flexibility in addressing the issues. See the attached sample questions in Appendix A for helpful illustrations. The two written exams will be read by both examiners, and each exam will be given a separate grade of *pass* or *fail* by consensus of the two-person examining committee. **The department does not give designations of “distinction” for Doctoral Exams.** If a *fail* grade is given to one or both exams, the student will be permitted to re-take the failed exam(s) once, generally by the mid-point of the fall term of the third year and in any case no later than the end of that same term. When examiners cannot agree on an overall grade for the written examination, the Director of Graduate Studies shall appoint a third reader to decide the overall grade. Examiners will use the grading rubric supplied by the department to provide initial feedback on the exams.

Results for each of the exams will be reported to the Director of Graduate Studies, who will in turn inform the student. Examiners should not inform students of results directly.

Following the Doctoral Examinations, the Examining Committee will meet as a group with the student to discuss the results in greater detail. This meeting will take place no later than two weeks after the return of the grading rubrics to the student. Following this meeting, the Examining Committee will be dissolved and the student will constitute a Dissertation Committee consisting of three members, one of whom will serve as Director. The Dissertation Committee may (but need not) consist of the two examiners plus a third member, from NYU or the Inter-University Doctoral Consortium.

Dissertation Proposals

Over the course of the exam-preparation period, students should consult with their faculty examiners, the Director of Graduate Studies, and other knowledgeable faculty members about ideas for the Dissertation, and for the composition of the Dissertation Committee, including the Dissertation Director. When the Doctoral Examinations have been completed and passed, and a Dissertation Committee constituted, the student will consult with the Committee about which next steps to take. Options include proceeding directly to the drafting of the Dissertation Proposal or undertaking a preparatory exercise, such as a synthetic Literature Review (see Appendix B) or an annotated bibliography. The decision regarding a preparatory exercise will depend on multiple factors such as the level of preparation of the individual student as revealed through the Doctoral Examination, the contours of the projected dissertation project, and, above all, whether such an exercise will accelerate or retard the progress of the dissertation. This decision will be reached through agreement between the student and the members of the Dissertation Committee.

The deadline for completion of any preparatory exercise will be determined by the Dissertation Committee but will in no case be later than the eleventh week of the fall term following the Doctoral Examination. Students who elect not to do a preparatory exercise will ordinarily draft a Dissertation Proposal by the same date.

During the Fall term of the third year, all students will take the four-credit Dissertation Seminar I (Engl-GA.3972). Depending on the path chosen, this course will supervise the drafting and discussion of the Literature Review or the Dissertation Proposal. It will not meet as a formal class. During the spring semester of the third year the student is enrolled in the four-credit Dissertation Seminar II (Engl-GA.3981), which, depending on the path chosen, supports the drafting and defense of the Dissertation Proposal or the initial stages of dissertation writing, under the auspices of the Dissertation Committee.

The Dissertation Proposal, the main body of which runs to 10-15 pages, should contain the following elements:

- A title page including the candidate's name, the dissertation director's name, the date, and the proposed dissertation title
- A statement of the purpose, scope, and anticipated conclusions of the dissertation (4–7 pages), including
A preliminary hypothesis or argument
Explanation of the major critical concerns, questions, and issues with which the project is engaged
Survey and description of the primary materials for research and analysis
Summary of the major areas of scholarship with which the project will be engaged
- An indication of the dissertation's basic organization, if not a preliminary chapter outline (6–8 pages)
- A working bibliography

A complete draft of the Dissertation Proposal shall be due to the Dissertation Committee and to the office of the Graduate Program no later than the week following spring break, for those who have undertaken a preparatory exercise. Those who have not should aim to submit the Dissertation Proposal by the eleventh week of the Fall semester. Submission of the proposal will be followed by an hour-long Dissertation Proposal Defense, to be held no later than three weeks after submission of the Dissertation Proposal. The objective of the proposal defense is to determine whether the student is in fact ready to proceed with the project and likely to complete it within the next three years. To that end, the Dissertation Committee will query the student about the plan for preparing the Dissertation, addressing such matters as the type of research required, the analytical methods to be used, the point to be

Dissertation Proposals cont'd

argued, and the order in which the chapters will be written, and offering practical advice as necessary. Summer funding is contingent upon successful defense of the dissertation proposal.

If the committee requires that the Proposal be extensively revised and another Defense scheduled, a second defense must be successfully administered before the beginning of the student's fourth academic year, or the student will be terminated from the program. Once the Dissertation Committee is satisfied with the student's plan for completing the Dissertation, its members sign the official "Approval to Write Dissertation" form and submit it to the DGS. Immediately thereafter, the student begins work on the Dissertation proper. **A complete draft of the first chapter of the dissertation is due for all students by September 1 of the fourth year, though students who have not elected to do a preparatory exercise should aim at an earlier date.**

Appendix A: Sample Doctoral Examination Questions

The following is a sample question and faculty are not bound to this style of question, topic, etc

Sample English Doctoral Exam Questions

Major Field: Nineteenth-Century British Literature

Choose one of the following and respond with an essay that is approximately 3,000 to 4,000 words. Your response should be cogent, detailed, and thoughtful.

1. Choose four literary works from your major field list, at least one of which must have been published early in the period, one during the middle part of the century, and one late in the period. For each of these works, briefly discuss the ways that themes having to do with imperialism figure in the text. Devote about 1,500 words to this part of your response. Then develop an argument, of about 1,500 to 2,500 words, about the emergence of imperial concerns as a thematic and formal feature of nineteenth-century British literature.
2. Choose four literary works from your major field list, at least one from each of three different genres. Select these texts because they all examine or deal in some way with a single theme or idea. Develop an argument about genre in the period, paying special attention to generic interrelation and innovation, in which you use the thematic overlap of these texts to highlight their similarities, differences, and relationships.
3. Choose three of the works of secondary criticism on your field list and develop an argument about three of the approaches that scholars took to nineteenth-century literature during the 1980s and 1990s. All of your texts were published during those decades except Lukacs' Theory of the Novel. If you want, you may position the more recent texts in relation to Lukacs' work but this is not necessary. After describing the approaches represented by the three texts you choose (about 1,500 words), discuss the feature of one or more literary texts that each of these approaches illuminates and obscures (1,500 to 2,000 words).

Appendix B: The Literature Review

Students who elect to do the Literature Review will begin by compiling a list of approximately twenty items focused in an area of recognized scholarly significance, delineated by the student with a view to the dissertation project. This list can, and usually will, include both primary and secondary items. Study of these works will culminate in the student's summarizing their import in a formal literature-review essay of 2500 to 3000 words, to be submitted to the Dissertation Committee by the end of the eleventh week of the student's third fall semester. The literature review will conclude by presenting a research question—or set of research questions—issuing from the engagement with the topic bibliography, and to be taken up in the dissertation. Further information and tips for the Literature Review can be found on the departmental website.

Dissertation and Job Search

If the committee requires that the Proposal be extensively revised and another Defense scheduled, a second defense must be successfully administered before the beginning of the student's fourth academic year, or the student will be terminated from the program. Once the Dissertation Committee is satisfied with the student's plan for completing the Dissertation, its members sign the official "Approval to Write Dissertation" form and submit it to the DGS. Immediately thereafter, the student begins work on the Dissertation proper. A complete draft of the first chapter of the dissertation is due for all students by September 1 of the fourth year.

The degree of Master of Philosophy (M.Phil.), is conferred to students who have fulfilled all doctorate requirements except the dissertation and its defense. This includes 72 credits and the passing of both the qualifying examination and dissertation proposal.

The writing of the Dissertation will proceed under the supervision of the Dissertation Director and in consultation with the two additional members of the Dissertation Committee. Students will meet regularly with their Dissertation Committees to discuss their progress over the writing period (see "Advising and Evaluation of Academic Progress"). It is expected that students will have made sufficient progress on their dissertations to go on the job market by the fall of the fifth year, and the Department will provide substantial guidance and practical support for all job seekers, assuming they present complete application packages, including appropriate teaching experience.

Dissertation Defense: PhD students are expected to defend their completed dissertation as the final step towards the doctorate degree. The defense includes the student's core committee member (i.e., a chair who must be a member of the English Department, and two additional members) as well as two external readers, who have relevant academic expertise in the dissertation field and topic. Lissette Florez will assist students in arranging the time and location of the defense. The English Department's video-conferencing technology is available for those members unable to attend the defense in person.

A student should provide all members a penultimate draft of the full dissertation at least one month prior to the date of the defense. The defense is scheduled to last 90 minutes and typically consists of a short presentation by the student providing an overview of the dissertation project. This is followed by an extended question and answer session, after which committee members and readers consult on the outcome of the defense. Students may be asked to revise extensively and, if necessary, a second defense scheduled if faculty are not satisfied with the dissertation and defense.

Please also consult GSAS guidelines for submitting the final dissertation and registering for graduation:
<http://gsas.nyu.edu/academics/submitting-your-dissertation.html>

Advising and Evaluation of Academic Progress

1. Students will consult with the Director of Graduate Studies each term before registering for courses.
2. The academic progress of all pre-dissertation students will be reviewed twice each year, in January and May. The purpose of the review is to provide feedback and guidance to students making good progress toward the degree as well as to those whose records reveal problems that need to be addressed.
3. Progress of students engaged in writing the dissertation will be monitored at regularly scheduled meetings of the core dissertation committee (principal advisor and second and third readers) and the student. For 4th year students and beyond, meetings will take place toward the beginning of the fall and end of the spring semesters.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

Plagiarism occurs when the student presents the words, ideas or research of others as his or her own work. Even if you cite the source from which you have taken material at some point, both word-for-word copying without quotation marks and the reproduction of whole sequences of ideas or sources without clear and immediate attribution are considered to be plagiarism. The submission of assignments purchased or otherwise derived from another person or a company is expressly forbidden. Be particularly careful in using Internet sources.

Please note that the submission of the same written work, in whole or in part, for two or more classes without the express permission of all the instructors involved is also a violation of Academic Integrity. Consult with your course instructors and project advisors in advance if you wish to submit the same work for more than one class or requirement. A verbal understanding is sufficient.

Students in our graduate programs are expected to maintain the highest level of Academic Integrity.

Any instance of plagiarism will generally result in the student's receiving a failing grade.

Model Schedule

First Year

Fall: 12 credits' worth of course work
Ph.D. Proseminar (4 credits. To
be taken in the fall term of the
first year)

Spring: 12 credits' worth of course work

*To be achieved by end of first year: Intermediate-level
proficiency in one foreign language.*

Second Year

Fall: 12 credits' worth of course work

Spring: 12 credits' worth of course work

*Due by end of spring semester: Approved lists for Major and
Minor Field Exams*

Summer: Guided Research in Preparation for Doctoral
Exam (4 credits for reading toward the Major and
Minor Field Exams)[Engl-GA.3001]

Third Year

(Teaching service anticipated in both Fall and Spring semesters. One-half of each semester's MacCracken stipend can be saved for future use)

Written Doctoral Exam in Major and Minor Fields (administered to all students in the week before the beginning of the fall semester)

MA awarded in September, on successful completion of Major and Minor Field Exams

Fall: Pedagogy Colloquium (4 credits)
 [Engl-GA.3985]
 Dissertation Seminar I (4 credits):
 [Engl-GA.3972]

Dissertation Seminar I entails preparatory reading for and drafting of the topic-list Literature Review, which is due in early December.

Spring: Professionalization Workshop (4 credits).
 Engl-GA.3980]
 Dissertation Seminar II (4 credits):
 [Engl-GA.3981]

Dissertation Seminar II entails (a) completion draft of the Dissertation Proposal shall be due no later than the week following the spring break (b) administration of the oral Dissertation Proposal Defense, which must be completed no later than the first week of May.

To be achieved by end of third year: Advanced-level proficiency in one foreign language, or intermediate-level proficiency in a second foreign language.

Fourth Year

(Teaching service anticipated in the Spring semester. One-half of that semester's MacCracken stipend can be saved for future use)

Progress on Dissertation (initial chapter due for all students by September 1 of the fourth year)

Fifth Year

(Teaching service anticipated in the Fall semester. One-half of that semester's MacCracken stipend can be saved for future use)

Job Market

Continue work on dissertation, ideally to completion

Sixth Year

(Fellowship provided through saved MacCracken funds, if they have been set aside previously)

Job Market

Complete dissertation if not already completed in fifth year

