THE DISSERTATION

The Dissertation Proposal Defense

Upon successful completion of at least one field exam, in the fall of the student’s third year in the program, the student is ready to begin formulating the dissertation project, which begins with the preparation of the dissertation proposal in the context of the Dissertation Proposal Workshop, which must be taken for credit in the spring semester of the third year. The dissertation proposal must be completed and defended by the beginning of the fourth year—no later than the third week of the fall semester. The proposal should include a description of the project, an explanation of the research methods, a brief survey of the literature within which the project will be positioned, an outline of chapters, and a bibliography of sources. This draft proposal should be prepared in consultation with a dissertation advisor—who must be a member of the SCA faculty—and two readers, one of whom may be from outside the department. The draft will be the basis for an oral discussion—the defense—which the student will attend along with the three committee members. This colloquium will also be an opportunity to review the work the student has done in the program to date, including the field exams. After the defense, students will revise the proposal, if necessary, and submit it to the DGS office after it has been signed by the three committee members. N.B.: While no more than three faculty members are required to serve on the core dissertation committee, the dissertation defense committee must consist of five members—the core dissertation committee plus additional faculty readers, as needed. No more than two of the five defense committee members may be from outside the department.

The overall length of the proposal should be no more than 20 pages, plus a full bibliography of less than 75 and no more than 120 items. The proposal breaks down into the following sections:

1) OVERVIEW (6-7 pages): Concise summary of the entire project. The three aims of the overview are as follows:
   a. To introduce the thesis topic
   b. To explain how prior scholarship has not fully addressed the thesis topic
   c. To outline the research that will be entailed in addressing the topic in the dissertation

N.B.: Because it is a proposal for research in the future, some elements of the overview will be provisional.

2) LITERATURE SURVEY (4-5 pages): The three aims of the literature survey are as follows:
   a. To review briefly the existing literature that is relevant to the thesis topic
   b. To explain how the existing literature will be drawn upon in the dissertation
   c. To argue for the unique relevance of the proposed dissertation in light of prior scholarship

3) METHODOLOGY (3-4 pages): This section describes the methods and means by which the student will approach the dissertation topic, gather research materials, and produce his or her analysis. While it varies widely according to the nature of the project, the methodology section should give a clear picture of the techniques and tools to be deployed in the dissertation. It should also provide details of archives and other institutional resources relevant to the project wherever relevant.

4) CHAPTER BREAKDOWN (4 pages): A brief outline of the proposed chapters

5) BIBLIOGRAPHY: from 75-120 items.