Ph.D. Preliminary Examination in Medieval and Early-Modern Literature and Culture
Germanic Studies, Indiana University

Current as of February, 2012

The Preliminary Examination in Medieval and Early-Modern Literature and Culture marks the conclusion of your course work and leads you over the threshold of your dissertation. This examination hence serves both a retro- and prospective purpose. That means: you may want to make your choices in light of your concluded course work as well as the research area represented by your dissertation.

The Preliminary Examination offers you thematic and chronological choices that are closely related to the “Ph.D. Reading List in Medieval and Early-Modern Literature and Culture”. There you will find additional information on the number of items to choose for part 1 and 2 of this examination.

The Examination consists of two section, each of them with a written and an oral part.

Part I: Survey

Part I of the Preliminary Examination consists of two written parts and one oral examination.

The written examination presents itself as follows:

**Part A** (two three-hour examinations) will test your knowledge of the history of the German literature from the beginnings up to 1700 and the related scholarship, with an emphasis on textual genres, literary periods, and primary and secondary literature. This part is closely related to your selection of items (“Survey”) on the Ph.D. Reading List in Medieval and Early-Modern Literature and Culture, focusing on two of the following sub-areas:

1. Early and High Middle Ages (beginnings until 1250)
2. Late Middle Ages (1250 until 1500)
3. Reformation and Baroque (1500-1700)

**Part B** (one ninety-minute examination) will test your knowledge of the history of the German language and its structure and will also include knowledge of the history of the older Germanic languages. Choose two of the following areas:

1. Older Continental West Germanic (Old High German and Old Saxon)
2. Middle High German
3. Old Norse
4. Old English

The oral examination (one hour) addresses critically your written exams and engages you in a discussion that may also lead beyond the boundaries of the chosen segments covering any areas in Medieval and Early-Modern literature and culture deemed appropriate.

Part II: En route to the dissertation

Part II of the Preliminary Examination consists of one take-home examination written over the period of seven full days and an oral examination. In this exam you have the opportunity to “define yourself” in view of the dissertation. Hence, the written examination is best viewed as your first major step in conceiving and writing the dissertation and staking out your proposed area of dissertation research.

Instead of offering sample electives, we suggest that the exchange with the advisor should help you identify research area in which you can define a viable project. This part is closely related to your selection (“My project”) of items on the Ph.D. Reading List in Medieval and Early-Modern Literature and Culture.
Two weeks prior to being assigned the take-home examination, you turn in a sketch of 2-3 pages outlining the research area, methodological questions. Your paper allows the committee to elaborate a more focused assignment for the take-home examination.

The oral examination (one hour) entails the critical discussion of the written take-home examination. The first 20 minutes of which shall be devoted to your presentation of your projected dissertation research. The remaining 40 minutes may address any perceived deficiencies in Part II of your written exam, your 20-minute presentation, or any other areas relevant to your proposed dissertation research deemed appropriate.

**How to schedule the Preliminary Examination?**

Part I (A and B, written examination) shall be taken within one week, with two-three business days intervening. The oral examination shall be scheduled within two weeks of the completion of the written examination for Part I.

Part II shall begin within six months of the completion of Part I. The oral examination for Part II shall be scheduled within two weeks of the completion of the take-home examination for Part II.