Ph.D. Preliminary Examination in Modern German Literature and Culture

[The Ph.D. preliminary examination in Modern German Literature and Culture, as formulated below, was approved by the faculty on 17 February 1999, and is binding on all students matriculating in August 1999 and thereafter. It is optional for students who matriculated before that date.]

General-list Exam: Every candidate for the Ph.D. in Modern German Literature and Culture is required to demonstrate familiarity with a diversified body of literary and critical texts. The purpose of this requirement is to give students a comprehensive background that they will be able to call upon in their future research and teaching. To this end, students take a standardized general exam covering material taken from a departmental representative list of two hundred literary and critical works. (Strings of poems count as one text.) The student will be examined on 75% of this list. Because general coverage is desired, no substitutions to the list will be allowed. Please see the Graduate Secretary for a copy of the reading list. It is the responsibility of the student and his/her committee to obtain all necessary works contained on each individual’s reading list.

The texts to be examined will be determined by the student in consultation with her/his committee, comprised of three or four members appointed by the Director of Graduate Studies. The exam will be conducted as two four-hour cloistered exams given on consecutive days, or, at the discretion of the student, separated by one day. The student will be required to answer two questions on each exam. The committee will evaluate the answers, and each member will assign a grade of H (Honors), P (Pass), or F (Fail).

The general-list exam will take place before the completion of course work for the Ph.D. Students matriculating with a B.A. (or equivalent degree) will take this exam by the beginning of their fourth year. Students matriculating with an M.A. (or equivalent degree) will take this exam by the beginning of their third year.

Oral Exam on Research Proposal: Within one month after the general-list exam, the student proposes an oral exam committee of at least three members to approximate as closely as possible her/his dissertation committee. Final decisions on the makeup of the committee will be made by the Director of Graduate Studies. Upon final selection of the committee, it meets with the student to discuss informally the student’s future research and to give suggestions for relevant readings. The student will develop his/her research proposal, which s/he will defend within one year of completing the general-list exam. At least three weeks prior to this defense, the student must provide her/his committee with a written report on his/her research project, which must include:

1. a description of the question, problem, or area to be examined in the dissertation;
2. a description of the conceptual, historical, or scholarly background, context, and/or work that has led the student to the question, problem, or area to be examined in the dissertation; and
3. a selected list of texts, including theoretical work, relevant for the thesis.

Before the oral exam can take place, the written report must be accepted by the committee. The oral exam will focus on the material presented in and pertinent to the written report.