

# U.S. HISTORY

## PHD QUALIFYING EXAMINATION GUIDELINES

### **1. Expectations for students taking the oral examination in the major field**

The purpose of the examination is to assess students' scholarly preparation to teach survey courses in American history through the demonstration of the ability to discuss key issues and problems in these areas. Students should demonstrate mastery of the entire chronological scope of American history, from European contact to the present. While committees are responsible for ensuring that students' preparation includes this full chronological sweep, they must also help each student to develop his or her own particular questions or framework for framing that breadth. The format in which students will be expected to demonstrate both chronological and topical breadth as well as individuality is by designing a course syllabus or syllabi that cover(s) the entire chronological scope of American history. The syllabus/syllabi should identify major themes that will draw together diverse topics. Under the guidance of his/her committee, s/he should prepare a bibliography of relevant scholarly works and identify the key issues and problems that will inform the syllabus/syllabi and thus constitute the focus of the examination. The students' bibliographies and syllabus/syllabi will be circulated to all faculty members in the U.S. field.

The student chooses the members of his/her examination committee consisting of three faculty members from the U.S. field. The student should meet with the U. S. members of his/her committee several months in advance of the examination. During this and/or subsequent meetings the committee and the student should come to a mutual understanding of (1) the key issues and problems on which the student will be examined; (2) the scope and focus of the syllabus/syllabi that the student will prepare; and (3) the content of the student's bibliography.

During the course of the oral examination the student should (1) persuasively defend the themes and readings s/he has chosen, (2) demonstrate mastery of the scholarship that informs the syllabus or syllabi; (3) demonstrate a grasp of relevant historiographical debates; and (4) provide detailed explanations of how s/he would teach particular subjects listed on his/her syllabus/syllabi. We define minimum competence needed for a passing grade as a command of the main historical developments, an awareness of key publications, and an understanding of critical scholarly debates sufficient to teach a comprehensive survey course or courses in American history.

## **2. Expectations for students taking the oral examination in the inside minor field**

Two members of the U.S. field must be present at the oral examination. The student should construct a course syllabus or syllabi that cover(s) a substantial chronological period. The syllabus/syllabi should identify major themes that will draw together diverse topics. Under the guidance of the U.S. representatives of his/her committee, s/he should prepare a bibliography of relevant scholarly works and identify the key issues and problems that will inform the syllabus/syllabi and thus constitute the focus of the examination. The student's bibliographies and syllabus/syllabi will be circulated to all faculty members in the U.S. field.

The student should meet with the U.S. representatives of his/her committee several months in advance of the examination. During this and/or subsequent meetings the committee and the student should come to a mutual understanding of (1) the key issues and problems on which the student will be examined; (2) the focus and scope of the syllabus/syllabi that the student will prepare; and (3) the content of the student's bibliography.

During the course of the oral examination the student should (1) persuasively defend the themes and readings s/he has chosen, (2) demonstrate mastery of the scholarship that informs the syllabus or syllabi; (3) demonstrate a grasp of relevant historiographical debates; and (4) provide detailed explanations of how s/he would teach particular subjects listed on his/her syllabus/syllabi. We define minimum competence needed for a passing grade as a command of the main historical developments, an awareness of key publications, and an understanding of critical scholarly debates sufficient to teach a survey course in American history that covers a substantial chronological period.

## **3. Guidelines for the prospectus**

The dissertation prospectus shall consist of a 4,000-5,000-word historiographical essay that will identify what the student sees as the originality and significance of the proposed dissertation topic, a 1,500-word grant proposal, plus a bibliography. These three elements should be combined in this order into a single document, which will form the basis of the second stage of the qualifying examination: the defense of the dissertation proposal.