

**University of Illinois
Department of French & Italian**

Ph.D. Qualifying Examination in French Studies

The Ph.D. qualifying examination should be scheduled early in the fourth semester of the Ph.D. stage of graduate study (usually no later than March of the second year of Ph.D. courses).

The members of the Ph.D. qualifying examination committee (usually all available faculty members in French Studies) are named by the Head of the department.

The examination is conducted in French. It is similar in structure to the M.A. examination: it has two components, written and oral, and is based on the French Studies reading lists covering four periods of French literature and culture (Medieval and Renaissance; 17th and 18th Centuries; 19th Century to mid-20th Century; and mid-20th Century to 21st Century including Francophone). The qualifying exam is cumulative and covers all four periods: for students who received their M.A. from FRIT, the written component of the qualifying exam mostly focuses on the two periods not chosen for the M.A. exam.

Students also prepare a short reading list of additional works for their planned period of specialization. This may be one of the two periods chosen for the M.A. examination, or one of the two periods remaining for the Ph.D. qualifying examination. This additional list should be designed in consultation with the relevant faculty member.

The written component of the Ph.D. qualifying examination in French Studies will have three sections with choices offered within each section:

- 1) The *explication de texte* section will offer a choice of excerpts of poetry or prose, selected by the committee from texts that appear on the reading lists.
- 2) The section of shorter questions may focus on a particular text, period, genre, theme, or approach.
- 3) The essay question section will consist in a longer question related to the list of additional works from the student's proposed period of specialization.

The Ph.D. qualifying examination is designed to test students' knowledge of the selected texts, their ability to discuss them critically, and the quality of their written and spoken French. Sample questions can be consulted in the department: please ask the FRIT Office Manager.

Examination logistics

The written component is taken in an exam room, on a laptop without a web connection provided by SLCL. The use of smartphones and similar devices is prohibited; only a French/French dictionary is allowed. The written component of the exam is 8 hours long in total, divided into 2 days (not necessarily consecutive): sections 1) and 2) on the first day, and section 3) on the second day. Exams are scheduled through SLCL Grad Services.

The oral component of the examination will be about 1.5 to 2 hours long and is scheduled a week or two after the written component, if the student has passed the written. (A student who fails the written component must retake it before moving on to the oral: see below.) The oral exam will include a discussion of the student's written answers as well as questions on other texts from all four reading lists and the student's list of additional works.

The Ph.D. qualifying examination is administered by FRIT: no report is made to the Graduate College. A combined result for both components (Pass, Fail) is reported to the FRIT Director of Graduate Studies. Students must pass the Ph.D. qualifying examination before beginning work on the Ph.D. preliminary (prospectus) examination and thesis.

If the oral or written component results in a grade of "Fail," it may be retaken once, usually the following semester. A student with two failures in the Ph.D. qualifying exam (including failing different components) must withdraw from the program. Appeals may be considered only on grounds of alleged unfair treatment and would be directed to the FRIT Graduate Studies committee.