Comprehensive Examinations Regulations (2015-16)

The comprehensive exams must be taken by April 30 of Year III in the program. Students must complete all of their course requirements, the language exam and the thesis proposal before they take the comprehensive examinations. The exams consist of two written exams and one oral exam. All exams are graded pass/fail.

No texts or notes are permitted in the written exams. Students are provided with a laptop with which to write their answers, but no notes, documents, webpages, etc. are to be consulted. The laptop is for word processing only. These are closed book exams.

The student must indicate her or his desire to take the exams by contacting the Graduate Program Director and their Supervisor. This must happen at least two months before the exams will be held.

Whenever possible, the exams will be taken over a period of one week. If this is not possible, the period over which exams will be taken shall not exceed two weeks. The oral exam can only be taken if the two written exams receive a pass.

The student must pass all three exams to advance to ABD status. Any part of the tripartite exam may be failed and repeated once within 3 months. Any student who fails any one of the three exams more than once will be withdrawn from the program.

Exam #1: Specific Field

The examination committee will consist of the student’s supervisory committee. In consultation with his or her supervisory committee, the student devises a reading list that covers the broad field related to his or her research. While some of these texts might duplicate those that are on the thesis bibliography, this exam is to cover a wider area than the narrow thesis topic. At least one month prior to the scheduled exam, the student proposes three exam questions in consultation with the supervisor. The supervisor (who may, of course, consult with the rest of the thesis committee) will choose one of these questions for the exam. The question will not be shared with the student before the commencement of the exam. The student will have 3 hours to write an essay responding to the question. All members of the committee will grade the examination. Unanimity among the examiners is not required for a passing grade. If all members, except for one, agree that the examination is satisfactory, the student passes. If more than one member of the committee deems the examination unsatisfactory, the student fails.

Exam #2: General Fields

The examination committee will consist of the student’s supervisor and two other members from the list of HUMA core faculty members. The student will be examined on texts from two of the four fields of interdisciplinary study (Ways of Knowing, Social Critique and Transformation, Culture and Aesthetics and Digital Humanities). A list of texts and the bank of five questions to be drawn from for the exam will be distributed to the students and posted on the program website. As the list may change from time to time, students will have the option of using the list distributed during their first year in the program or the list circulated in the year they take the exam. The examination committee will choose two questions from the bank of questions to appear on the exam, and the student will answer one of the two questions. The student will have three hours to write this essay. All members of the committee will grade the examination. Unanimity among the examiners is not required for a passing grade. If all members, except for
one, agree that the examination is satisfactory, the student passes. If more than one member of the committee deems the examination unsatisfactory, the student fails.

**Exam #3: Oral Exam**

Once the student has passed the two written exams, he or she will take the oral exam. The GPD or designate will chair the oral exam. The student's supervisor may not chair the oral exam. The examiners will consist of the examination committee from both Exam #1 (Specific Field) and Exam #2 (General Fields). The length of this exam is three hours.

The oral exam will consist of questions and answers related to the two written exams. It may begin with a statement by the student that clarifies some points he or she made in the written exams, or the student's supervisor might choose to begin with a question. The purpose of this exam is to ask questions about the written exams and to draw out some of the relationships between the two general interdisciplinary fields and the field of the student’s thesis research.

All members of the committee will grade the examination. Unanimity among the examiners is not required for a passing grade. If all members, except for one, agree that the examination is satisfactory, the student passes. If more than one member of the committee deems the examination unsatisfactory, the student fails. The Chair does not have a vote.

Oral examinations will be recorded. The recording will be kept confidentially in electronic format in the student's file by the GPD. The audio file will be destroyed once the student graduates or leaves the program.