

Guide to the Comprehensive Exams in Literature and Creative Writing
(Effective Fall 2012)

A student will choose two of the exam fields listed below and take one exam in each field. Each field has a standard reading list. These lists can be found at the Resources for Current Graduate Students webpage (<http://english.missouristate.edu/grad-student-resources.htm>).

Next to the name of each exam below are the names of faculty members with whom students may consult about the exam.

pre-1798 English/British: Professors Jim Baumlin and Jonathan Newman

post-1798 British: Professors Joel Chaston, Lanya Lamouria, and Shannon Wooden

pre-1900 American: Professors Etta Madden, Erin Kappeler, and Matt Calihman

post-1900 American: Professors Linda Trinh Moser, Erin Kappeler, and Matt Calihman

literature for the young: Professors Joel Chaston and Judith John

critical theory: Professors Jim Baumlin and Shannon Wooden

form and theory of poetry: Professors Sara Burge and Marcus Cafagna

form and theory of fiction: Professors Jen Murvin, W.D. Blackmon, and Mike Czyzniejewski

A student taking an exam in British or American literature will be expected to know at least the broad outlines of the relevant literary history. That is, the student will need to have a general knowledge of the following: the era's literary movements, major genres and styles, significant authors and texts, and recurrent literary themes; the political and social events that shaped or were shaped by the literature of the period; and related intellectual and cultural developments (philosophical, scientific, religious, artistic, etc.). The secondary texts included in the reading lists will help students to learn the literary histories of their periods.

A student may choose to take an exam in literature for the young only if the student has done coursework in children's or young adult literature.

Although coursework will help students to prepare for their exams, students will need to do a considerable amount of independent study. The study process consists mainly of reading the works on the standard reading list and synthesizing what one has read. The standard reading lists include required and/or optional secondary readings intended to help students conceptualize their fields or to order the study process, and all test-takers will benefit from doing at least some reading of this sort.

By the first Friday of the semester in which a student intends to take exams, the student will complete the "Comprehensive Examination Application/Results Form" (available on the Graduate College's webpage, under "Forms"). The student should also list at the top of this form the fields in which s/he will take exams. The form is to be submitted to the Graduate Director, who will acknowledge the application and inform the student of the exam date, time, and location. Exams will be given in a campus computer lab and begin at 9:00 a.m. In the Fall, the exam date will be the Friday after Fall Break; in the Spring, the Friday after Spring Break; and in the Summer, the first Friday of the semester.

Each exam will include three questions written by faculty. A student will choose one of these questions and answer it in essay form. The student will have two hours to complete each exam. There will be a half-hour break between the two exams.

Essays may be typed or written by hand. Students may not bring books or notes to the exam and may not download any information from the internet, the computer, or a disk.

Each exam will be read blindly by at least two faculty members, and students will be notified of their exam results within two weeks of the exam date. Each essay will be rated "high pass," "pass," "low pass," or "fail." If faculty readers decide to offer separate ratings of an essay, then the essay will pass only if it receives some combination of the following ratings: "high pass," "pass," or "low pass." Both essays must pass in order for a student to satisfy the comprehensive exam requirement.