



# Graduate English Handbook

Policies, Procedures, Advice

**2009-2010**

# The English Graduate Handbook 2009-2010

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## I.

**Mission**

The SMU doctoral program in English provides students with a broad knowledge of English, American and Anglophone literature, critical theory and pedagogy. The program also trains students in research methods as well as in textual and editorial practices that are foundational to their work as scholar-teachers. The faculty is committed to training future teachers and to the ideal that teaching and scholarship mutually nourish and sustain careers in our field. After a first year course in pedagogy, students begin a carefully mentored, structured program designed to conclude with their teaching literature courses in their chosen field. The program also emphasizes each student's ability to research and write innovatively and effectively. Students are assigned a mentor on first arriving and will thereafter work closely with other mentors, committee members and their dissertation director. The program encourages each doctoral student to become involved professionally: to present scholarship at conferences and symposia and to engage the daily life of the department, college and university, from the ordinary work of self-governance to the dynamic energy of intellectual exchanges and programs scheduled throughout the year. SMU's English doctoral program is selective and small, with unique offerings like the Taos Summer Seminar. Thus it provides opportunities to forge close collegial relationships with faculty and fellow students, ties that will also support and promote the graduate's professional work for years to come.

## II.

**Deadlines**

**Application to program:** All application materials must be submitted by January 15<sup>th</sup> to ensure full consideration. If some part of the application cannot be completed by the deadline, as much of the application as possible should be on file at SMU.

**Language Requirement:** The minimum requirement of one non-English language must be completed prior to the semester in which written exams are scheduled.

**Decision on five-year program:** Students who elect the five-year program must make the decision by the end of their 3<sup>rd</sup> semester in residence.

**Written Qualifying Exam:** Written Qualifying Exams will generally be taken in the Fall. This would normally be the 5<sup>th</sup> semester (in the 5-year program) or 7<sup>th</sup> semester (6-year program) in residence.

**Oral Qualifying Exam:** Oral Qualifying Exams will generally be scheduled for the semester following the Written Exams.

**Completion of dissertation:** Dissertations should be completed within the five- or six-year period of the program. After two years following the end of that period, students must apply to the program for permission to complete the degree.

### III.

#### Funding

Students admitted to the Ph.D. program will receive funding for five or six years. We expect students to remain enrolled and in residence during the school year for the entire period of the program, including the non-teaching year. Following interruptions of no more than one year for medical or personal reasons, students will generally be permitted to resume the program schedule and funding. It is crucial that students interrupting their studies discuss the circumstances with the Director of Graduate Studies.

Funding consists of tuition, fees, basic health benefits, and a stipend. The stipend is not payment for required teaching during the program and so will not be paid as taxable income.

**N.B.:** Students who have requested their lending institutions to defer outstanding student loans must maintain at least part-time student status or lose their deferments. This is normally six hours or more, but those students who have completed their regular coursework will need to enroll in ENGL 8049, a non-credit, pass/no pass course that bestows full-time status on those who enroll, in addition to reading and dissertation hours. Please consult the DGS for assistance.

### IV.

#### Policies

**Travel for conferences and research:** Both research in scholarly archives, and attending and participating in professional conferences are essential components of our profession. During their time in the program all students should make every effort to obtain experience in these areas. Such experience will simultaneously help improve their work and increase their visibility and likely success as a job candidate. We encourage attendance at conferences—local, regional, national or international. Following a student's first year in the program, the department will fund travel up to \$1,000 for each year in residence. Conference funding is reserved for those meetings at which the student is presenting a paper. Students may also apply for funding to improve professional development, including attendance at summer symposia or institutes, or to take language immersion courses.

We recommend reserving some of these funds for later in the graduate career, when attending major national and international conferences (eg. MLA, CCCC, ASA, GEMCS, ICMS) can best enable a candidate to present research (including the dissertation), network in the field, and advance the job search.

**Travel Reimbursement:** Students should submit a request to the Director of Graduate Studies for reimbursement for professional travel well in advance of a planned departure. At the very least, this should be done several weeks prior to a conference or archive visit, but whenever possible, submit the request as soon as a paper has been accepted or when plans to visit a particular archive are finalized.

In addition, each traveler must submit a Dedman College Travel Request form and other attendant paperwork to the English department, again, several weeks *prior to* the expected travel. While traveling keep all receipts, including those for airline tickets, food, transportation, or registration fees; they must be submitted with the Travel Request form upon return.

**Photocopies:** Use departmental photocopy machines solely for work- and study-related purposes, and always with good judgment and economy. Each student is provided with a photocopy account that will be monitored. Excessive or unnecessary use may result in loss of photocopying privileges.

**Offices:** Any assigned office is for work and study. Because the Department of English has very limited office space, it is necessary to share offices. First priority will go to students with teaching duties; those not teaching may not be assigned an office. To resolve office space problems, please consult the DGS.

**Self-governance:** Whenever reasonable, graduate students will be included on departmental committees, including particularly the Graduate Studies Committee. In order to ensure representation, doctoral students are encouraged to form and maintain a student association that will nominate committee members, serve as a forum for graduate student issues and concerns, and enhance departmental collegiality.

**Jobs and Residency:** We are committed to graduating all doctoral students in good time, generally within five to six years. To that end, we have provided comparatively generous stipends for that term of study. In return, we expect that students will devote full working time to scholarship and teaching during the fall and spring terms, and not take any outside employment. We also expect students to remain in residence during the school term unless engaged in research at an archive outside Dallas or have another good reason to be away.

**Health Insurance:** All Ph.D. students are provided a basic health insurance policy, including use of Memorial Health Care Center on campus. Like all health plans, this policy has limitations, including a \$200,000/year maximum. Unlike most plans, this one has no out-of-pocket maximum. We recommend that students covered by another policy retain that coverage as well. For details of the health policy, see <https://www.academichealthplans.com/smu/2009-2010/>. Students will be responsible for any health care expenses not covered by the policy. Family members can be added to the policy at the student's expense. Although SMU recognizes domestic partners for

faculty and staff benefits, the student Health Insurance program does not at present do so.

**Leaves:** At this time, the graduate program has no provision for paid medical leave, family leave, or other exigencies that require a student to interrupt graduate studies. However, students enrolled in the program at the beginning of the school year will remain enrolled in the Health Insurance program for the remainder of the year. Students who must take a leave should discuss the circumstances with the DGS and, when possible, make plans for reentering the program as soon as it is reasonable.

**Parental leave:** The Department recognizes that many graduate students will be enrolled during prime childbearing years and welcomes the addition of children to our community. SMU is currently working on a comprehensive set of policies regarding maternity, paternity, and child-care. Until such time, the Department adopts the following policies.

1. The Department pledges that no student will be discriminated against in the program for pregnancy or for becoming a parent.
2. The program will make accommodations to the course of study (for example: the scheduling of exams and the completion of the dissertation) following the birth or adoption of a child.
3. The program will extend funding for one semester and will not require the student to teach or take classes for one semester upon the birth or adoption of a child. This provision will take effect following the first year in residence.

**Grievance procedures:** We recommend that students acquaint themselves with provisions in the SMU Policy Manual and the Student Handbook. In general, grievances should be addressed to the DGS. If the complaint involves the DGS, it should be addressed to the Chair of English. Although mentors and other members of the faculty are available to discuss situations students find problematic, all serious grievances should be taken to the administration of the department or college: to the DGS, the Chair, or the Dean.

We take the dignity and safety of each student seriously. Students should never feel singled out, targeted or ridiculed on the basis of their physical appearance, gender, race, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, or on any other grounds. Comments or jokes directed at or about a student on such bases are never appropriate in the classroom. If a student chooses to express concern about the actions of a faculty member, the DGS or a faculty member will communicate with the student at every step until the matter is resolved. If a student or students express concern about conduct directed by another student to or about a member of the faculty or staff at SMU, the student in question will be notified and asked about the incident or incidents in question before further action is taken. Students who lodge a complaint or who experience questionable behavior directed at them will not be penalized for expressing concern or making a complaint, and their privacy will be protected as much as possible.

Sexual harassment issues follow a different process. The university Policy Manual and the Student Handbook ([http://smu.edu/studentlife/PDF/SMU\\_Student\\_Handbook\\_09-10.pdf](http://smu.edu/studentlife/PDF/SMU_Student_Handbook_09-10.pdf)) are again useful for their guidelines. Sexual harassment can include unwanted physical advances, or “a pattern of conduct (not legitimately related to the subject matter of an academic course, if one is involved, or to a workplace discussion, if that is the case) that causes humiliation or discomfort, such as sexually explicit or sexist comments, questions, anecdotes or jokes” as well as a “pattern of conduct that would cause humiliation or discomfort in the person at whom the behavior was directed (e.g., unnecessary touching, patting, hugging, brushing against a person’s body or clothing, remarks of a sexual nature about a person’s body or clothing, remarks or speculation about a person’s sexual activity or sexual experience.”<sup>1</sup> If you think you have experienced an isolated incident of sexual harassment or have been subjected to a pattern of behavior that might constitute sexual harassment, it is important to know that any claim of sexual harassment requires an official record, so you cannot ask anyone on the faculty or any member of the Department of English staff for complete confidentiality. However, Memorial Health Center has experienced counselors on staff who may speak to you in confidence and who can give you advice on how to understand what has happened and how to respond to it.

The University Policy Manual allows for both informal and formal procedures in response to sexual harassment. Conferring with a counselor may help in deciding the best path to take. A mentor or other trusted member of the faculty can also help negotiate this process.

## V.

### Course Waivers & Transfers of Credit

A student entering the program with a Masters degree in English from another institution may petition to count up to 12 credits toward the 48 credit requirement for the doctoral degree at SMU. Any student holding the Masters and planning to complete the Ph.D. on a five year plan will need to petition the DGS for a transfer of prior credits. The students should petition as soon as possible after enrolling at SMU. See “Deadlines” above.

Two different course requirements are open to petition for a waiver. First, a student entering the program with the Masters may petition to waive the ENGL 6310 requirement (Advanced Literary Studies), but the DGS will only grant a waiver for a prior course that very closely matches ENGL 6310 content, as demonstrated with a detailed syllabus from the prior course, filed with the petition. Second, a student pursuing a

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<sup>1</sup>From the “Sexual Harassment” brochure provided by the Office of Institutional Access & Equity at SMU. Brochures are available at Perkins Hall 204.

special plan of study may petition the DGS to waive one of the required seminars by substituting a Directed Studies course in its place. The waiver petition must include a detailed syllabus for the proposed Directed Studies course, and should be filed well in advance of enrollment for the student's upcoming semester.

## VI.

### Language Requirement

Ph.D. students are required to show reading competency in at least one non-English language. Some fields may require a second language, to be determined by the Dissertation Director and the DGS. Students are strongly advised to consult early with a mentor and the DGS about languages. In general, the chosen language should help provide the student gain more access to literature and criticism connected with the dissertation field. Those studying in earlier periods are more likely to need a second language to be competent in their fields. But knowing any second language helps one to know their native language better.

The minimum requirement of one non-English language must be completed prior to the semester in which written exams are scheduled. If a student fails the exam, the DGS will expect a detailed plan on how the student plans to complete the requirement. No student will be advanced to candidacy until the requirement is completed. Proficiency exams will be arranged by the DGS in coordination with the students. In general, it is the student's responsibility to acquire the language if it has not been learned prior to entering the program. Although the program may offer opportunities to study languages at SMU, until such language instruction has been fully institutionalized, students are advised to make their own arrangements.

## VII.

### Advising: Mentors & Directors

**Mentors:** Each student will be assigned a faculty mentor when entering the program. The mentoring program is intended to provide someone for students to talk to who is not involved in graduate program administration. Questions, for example, about the program, classes, the profession, and personal difficulties may be discussed confidentially, as needed, with the mentor. Mentors should always assure a mentee that nothing discussed in the course of a mentoring relationship will be used in a professional evaluation of the student. In turn, mentees should be assured that they may speak with candor and confidentiality about their concerns and professional development in the program. We recognize that the assignment of mentors may not work for each student-mentor pairing. A student may ask for a different mentor at any time for any reason, or choose not to make use of a mentor. The mentor is generally

not a student's academic advisor: be sure to consult with the DGS and your Exam or Dissertation Director for official academic advising.

**Directors—Qualifying Exam & Dissertation:** Our program does not require you to retain the same professor as both qualifying examination and dissertation director, nor should you feel obliged to do so. For the sake of clarity, though, this section treats them as one and the same.

The director(s) of the student's Ph.D. Qualifying Examination and Dissertation committees will fulfill several crucial roles in the student's graduate career and, more important, as a future colleague in our profession. The director is at once a principal teacher, a mentor, and an advocate for one's career. It is arguably the most important professional relationship any of us will establish in our career.

The primary role of the director is to extend the work begun by the DGS in working to focus and guide a student's progress. The director helps the student to build upon work accomplished in the Ph.D. courses, and in choosing the primary, secondary, and tertiary focus areas for the written qualifying examination. Even if the student has already decided upon those areas, the director will refine and supervise the reading lists for the written examinations, in consultation with the other members of your committee. The director should also offer advice and strategies as the student prepares for the examinations, during the stages of planning, researching, and writing the dissertation.

When choosing the director and the other committee members, carefully consider several criteria, each of nearly equal importance.

First, whenever possible choose someone of the appropriate rank who teaches and publishes in the primary field in which you specialize. As a general rule, it is best to choose the most senior person in the department in that field—that is, someone at the rank of Professor. In the absence of a faculty member at the highest rank, the student should choose a Professor with a clear publication record in his or her respective field. The main reason to give serious consideration to your director's rank is that the most senior person is likely to be the most experienced and knowledgeable. Even when this is not the case, it is true that hiring committees tend to look favorably upon job candidates who have completed their degrees under more senior faculty members.

Second, the student should choose a director likely to nourish a productive and comfortable working relationship. Normally, the student should have taken at least one course with the director, who thus knows the student's work. The student should be able to trust that the director will guide her or him to needed resources, critically encourage the research, and the efforts on task. The director is the committee member with whom the student must feel at ease in sharing questions and concerns, although the other members will be active consultants at each step.

Third, pick a director who will be available. When approaching the person with whom you would like to work, let her or him know your plans: when you expect to take your examinations; when you expect to complete your dissertation; when you hope to publish some of your work; when you plan to enter the job market. If, for example, you choose a director who will be on leave for most of your final years in the program, this will make maintaining a productive relationship much more difficult.

In approaching a faculty member about directing, come prepared with a précis of your plans, and with questions about what the potential director will expect of you. Try to obtain or provide satisfactory answers to the following questions:

- Does your potential director support your plans for study?
- Does she or he support the scholarly and intellectual goals of your dissertation project?
- What is your projected timeline for completing the later steps of the program?
- When do you expect to have dissertation chapters finished?
- What does your potential director expect of you?

The sooner you and your potential director understand how the relationship will work, the greater the chance the latter part of your graduate career will be highly rewarding.

The other two members of your committee should also be faculty members with whom you have had a productive relationship via regular coursework, independent studies, or other means. They should have expertise in the secondary or tertiary areas in which you will be examined for your qualifying examinations, and be capable of offering advice on parts of the dissertation. All three committee members will be responsible for reading your examinations and dissertation, and have equal voting power in determining whether they are acceptable. It is therefore important that all three members be both supportive yet objective in their assessment the dissertation project. The director and/or the DGS can recommend other members of the committee, if you have any uncertainty.

## VIII.

### **Evaluation & Standards**

Evaluation is an ongoing process. The faculty, and especially the DGS along with the student's mentor, director and committee members, take an unceasing interest in the student's progress, and will therefore be watching it carefully. Our goal is always to verify that each student is doing good work, learning what will lead to success (in terms of information and, more importantly, advanced skills), and making timely progress through the program. If those things temporarily stop happening, we will try to help a student get back on track; if a student seems unlikely to resume or successfully fulfill program goals, more serious action may become necessary, up to and including

dismissal from the program. Since most problems can be remedied, students with concerns about their performance or its evaluation should be active in discussing those concerns with their mentor/advisor, the specific evaluator(s), and/or the DGS.

Over the course of the program, there are four kinds of explicit assessment. Each focuses on determining whether the student is at that point making satisfactory progress toward becoming a qualified, accomplished scholar and teacher.

**Seminar grading:** In general, the graduate program uses a compressed grade scale, with the "A" range designating excellent work, the "B" range denoting work that is more or less acceptable but in need of improvement, and the "C" range indicating work that is unacceptable. A significant number of course grades of "B" and any grade of "C" will raise serious questions about the student's continuation.

**First Year Review:** All students will be carefully evaluated at the end of their first year by a subcommittee of the Graduate Studies Committee, and anyone whose work is found to be seriously lacking may be removed from the program. Our goal is that all first year students will pass this review in any given year.

**Master's Examination:** Those students who enter the Ph.D. program without a Master's degree will participate in an oral examination at the end of the first year. This examination will also serve as the First Year Review. Students will be asked to submit a portfolio of major work completed for their courses at SMU, accompanied by a statement reviewing the past year. A subcommittee of the Graduate Studies Committee will review the student's work and discuss it with the student for an oral examination lasting approximately an hour. Students who complete the examination satisfactorily shall be awarded the Master's degree *en passant*.

**Teaching evaluation:** All graduate student teachers will be regularly evaluated. If the evidence shows that a student is unable or unwilling to perform at a high level in the classroom, the student may be dismissed from the program despite otherwise performing well academically.

**Qualifying Exams:** Near the end of their fifth or seventh semester students sit for the written qualifying exams, detailed below ("Qualifying Exams"). The qualifying exams involve a two stage process: first, written exams in three fields; second, in the following (sixth or eighth) semester, an oral defense of a prospectus for the student's dissertation.

**Dissertation Defense:** The doctoral student's final accomplishment in the program will be the dissertation defense, detailed below ("The Dissertation"). A critical conversation on the project—including its methods, sources, theses, arguments

and contributions to the field—a successful defense of the dissertation caps the student’s graduate work. Your doctoral degree then warrants that you are well-qualified as a scholar-teacher in English language literatures.

## IX.

### Taos Summer Seminar

The Graduate Program offers an annual week-long seminar—usually in mid- to late July—at SMU’s campus in Taos, New Mexico, for students completing their first and second years in the Ph.D. program. The program is modeled loosely on National Endowment for the Humanities summer seminars. Each summer we invite an accomplished scholar from another university to lead our students through an immersion in a literary subject, field, or methodology of general interest. Students and teachers will live in casitas on the Taos campus. The week will allow opportunities to visit Santa Fe, Taos Pueblo, and some of the cultural sites in the area, in addition to hiking in the surrounding mountains. We expect students to arrange their summer schedules to attend these seminars.

## X.

### Program Timeline

**Length & Structure of the Program.** The Ph.D. program should require no more than six years from matriculation to completion and successful defense of the dissertation, at which time the doctorate will be awarded. The program may extend to a seventh year in the form of a Visiting Assistant Professorship, although such appointments will be made on a competitive basis after completion of the degree.

**Year One:** Doctoral students do not teach; they each take 24 hours, 6 of which entail the Core courses; they will likely be taking mostly proseminars. As Spring term ends, the student submits a portfolio of all papers written for the program and a brief written evaluation of his/her progress thus far, and meets with the First Year Advisory Committee (see note, and 3., above), which will determine whether the student shall continue (or be awarded the terminal MA). At this meeting the student and the FYAC discuss/advise on plans for the student’s upcoming coursework and a possible field of concentration leading into a dissertation. That summer, the student participates in training sessions/seminars to prepare for teaching.

**Year Two:** Each student teaches a total of two courses, and takes 15 hours, including 7000-level seminars and the Pedagogy seminar. The student should be completing the foreign language requirement, if not yet satisfied. By the end of Spring term, the student should have selected an Exam Director, who will

normally be a prospective dissertation director. The student meets with the director at year's end to discuss progress and possible dissertation topics, and to set goals for the coming year when he/she will be preparing for the qualifying exams.

**Year Three:** The student teaches two courses and concludes his/her seminar and other course work, but may opt to audit classes in preparation for the Qualifying Exams. See section on "Qualifying Exams" below.

**Year Four:** The student again teaches two courses, and enrolls in ENGL 7398/99 (Directed Readings). After passing the Qualifying Exams, he or she enrolls in ENGL 8398/99 (Dissertation credit) and remains enrolled until the completion of the dissertation. See section on "Qualifying Exams" below. After passing this qualifying oral exam, the student advances to candidacy. Students enrolled in fewer than six hours, including reading and dissertation hours, will enroll in ENGL 8049, a non-credit, pass/no pass course that bestows full-time status. Please consult the DGS for assistance.

**Year Five:** Dissertation fellowship year, no teaching; student is enrolled for 8398/99-level dissertation credit. (Alternatively, the dissertation fellowship may be taken in year six.) See section on "Dissertation" below.

**Year Six:** The student teaches 2 courses unless the student takes year six as the dissertation fellowship year; in either case remains enrolled in 8398/99, completes/defends the dissertation, begins the job-search.

**Year Seven:** Possible Visiting Assistant Professorship at SMU (a competitive position).

**Sequencing of Core Courses.** We require a two-course sequence required of all graduate students. The first, "Advanced Literary Studies," will survey research methods & materials, bibliography and textual editing, and history of the profession up to the present. The second, "Survey of Literary Criticism," is an introduction to literary criticism and theory. Depending upon faculty schedules, these courses may be offered simultaneously or in succeeding semesters. Students preparing to teach undergraduate classes will be required to complete training sessions/workshops before the fall of their second year and will enroll in 6312, the Teaching Practicum.

## XI.

### Teaching as a Graduate Student

We consider teaching to be an integral part of the training for the Ph.D. in English. Except for their first year and one dissertation year, students will teach one class each

semester. To make that teaching as successful and rewarding as possible, all students enroll in a seminar in pedagogy (6312) in the fall of their second year that leads them through their initial classes. In the spring of their first year, students meet with the seminar instructor occasionally and observe a range of classes like those they will be teaching. During the two weeks before fall semester of the second year, all students will participate in intensive training. The seminar provides formal supervision of the students' teaching during the fall and continues informally through the spring semester. In subsequent years, teaching will be increasingly independent, although there will always be a professor who will provide guidance and supervision. Since we hold teaching to be central to the program, students who find that they cannot teach competently or who choose not to will be asked to leave the program.

Beginning in the second year of teaching, students may apply to the DGS to teach selected courses outside of the First-Year Writing track under the supervision of a professor who will be the Instructor of Record. This instructor, in consultation with the Graduate Studies committee, will choose those students who best suit the course's needs.

Teaching is a complex, frustrating, endlessly rewarding and time-consuming endeavor. Teaching effectively while balancing it with demands of scholarship is difficult for all of our colleagues in the profession. Therefore any student should feel free to discuss this process with a Mentor, the DGS, dissertation director, or any other professor who might be of help. If you find yourself in trouble in a class, be sure to talk to the DGS sooner rather than later.

## XII.

### Qualifying Exams

The function of qualifying exams is both to prepare the doctoral student for future scholarship and to evaluate his or her readiness to begin the dissertation. By the spring semester of the second year/third year (5-yr/6-yr plan), the student will choose a Director for the **written exams**, often someone who may serve as the Director of your dissertation. The Director will help you in selecting the topics for the exams, preparing for the exams, and in selecting two other members of the examination committee. (You may wish to or be asked to add a fourth member from another faculty.) The committee will set the exam on a schedule the student arranges with the Director. Generally, the written exam will be taken by the end of fall of the 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> year.

During the fall of your 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> year of course work, the student should consult with the DGS to select a Director. Generally, you will approach the member of the faculty with whom you wish to work on your dissertation and decide whether it will be an appropriate and useful collaboration. Preferably, you will have taken a class from that professor and he or she will be familiar with your work and interests. In the spring

semester, you will enroll in one seminar or pro-seminar and English 7398 (Directed Reading) with your director. The purpose of 7398 (and 7399 in the following fall) is to allow you to read intensively in preparation for your exams.

The purposes of the written exams are, first, to test the breadth and depth of the student's knowledge in selected areas of literary history and approaches to literary study; second, to lay a foundation for and gain focus on the planned dissertation. The written exam will consist of three parts. All exams will include one section on a primary historical period representing your prospective specialty field for the dissertation. The student develops the two other examination areas in consultation with the committee members. Those areas might include a secondary period, a genre, an interpretive/theoretical problem (e.g. authorship, narratology, cultural studies, or an interdisciplinary approach) or some other topic. These parts may, indeed optimally they will, intersect the anticipated topic of your dissertation, but as a whole, they must take in a broad field of literary study, including a wide chronology and a range of genres and styles. The exam proposal will consist of first, an introductory rationale of about 2 – 3 pages explaining reasons for each examination field and how they relate to a possible dissertation; second and following are the lists, each including a brief statement of the logic and objectives for selections and the critical problems they present. The lists should consist *at least* forty primary texts (for example, novels, plays, or books of poetry) and a number of major critical/secondary texts. After gaining preliminary approval of the Director, submit the proposal to the other members of your committee. When the Committee approves the proposal, the Director will submit it to the Graduate Committee and with their approval the DGS will then set the date for your exams. In order for your summer reading to be most effective, be sure to gain these approvals by the end of the spring semester.

The written exams will be administered over three days during a one-week period, with eight hours (total) allotted each day. They are flexible in format. As decided by the student's committee, each of the three parts will include one or more longer essay questions/topics, and may also require responses to short essay prompts or directed answer questions. When completed, the student's committee members read and decide on a pass/fail designation for each; the director reports the result to the DGS, and to the student, generally within ten days.

Should the student fail one or more of the three parts, he or she may apply to the DGS for the privilege of a second examination of any failed exam(s); on the advice of the student's examining committee, the committee director will recommend to the DGS whether or not the student may sit for the second exam. Any re-take of a failed part or parts of the written qualifying exams must occur within three months of the first sitting. Failure on re-examination will render a student ineligible to continue in the Ph.D. program.

Once the student has passed the written exam, he/she will name a dissertation director for the next phase of the qualifying exam. The director may or may not be the same faculty member who directed the written exams. During the spring of the 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> year, with guidance from the director and dissertation committee members, the student prepares a prospectus for the dissertation and then sits for an oral examination, a “defense” of the prospectus. The prospectus should lay out the plan for a book-length project, including a concise description of the problem the dissertation will address, a critical history of the topic, and a discussion of what the chapters will argue and why his approach and argument are significant and original. The text must include all needed citations/annotations as well as a working bibliography for the project. At about 25 – 35 pages, the prospectus must be presented in a standard format (MLA or Chicago Manual), and be fully annotated and carefully proofed.

The student will set a date for the **oral exam** in discussion with the Director, for approval by the DGS. The oral will last approximately ninety minutes. As with the written portion, a student who fails the oral qualifying exam may petition for the privilege of a second examination to the DGS, who will decide in consultation the director and with the recommendation from the student’s examining committee. A second failure will render the student ineligible to continue in the Ph.D. program.

Upon successful completion of the oral examination, the DGS reports the result to the Office of Research and Graduate Study. The student must have satisfied the language requirement in order to be formally admitted to candidacy. With candidacy, you commence working on the dissertation, the capstone of your graduate career.

### **XIII.**

#### **The Dissertation**

The dissertation is an original, extended written analysis of an intellectual, scholarly, or critical issue; a set of texts; an author; a period; a genre; or some combination of these. It is to be carefully researched and written. The nature and scope of the dissertation, the archive of materials that one works with and the approach taken to them, depend primarily upon the student’s interests and commitments. Nevertheless, at every step of the process—beginning with the project’s conception and early stages—it is vital that the candidate consult with the dissertation director, committee members, and other knowledgeable faculty in the English department or beyond it, about the resources, methods and theoretical underpinnings of the planned research and writing.

The dissertation culminates the candidate’s coursework and studies. It uses what she or he knows and has done, but now takes that work in a new, original and significant direction. Thus it is both acceptable and wise for the candidate to build the dissertation from relevant papers, essays, presentations, and articles completed for seminars and/or professional conferences. Yet the dissertation project will also revise, unify and expand

the potential of that earlier work; the dissertation will argue a thesis that is wider in scope and that seeks to make an innovative and significant contribution to the relevant field(s).

We do not currently have a provision for creative writing dissertations.

#### **XIV.**

##### **The Dissertation Defense**

The candidate's final accomplishment in the PhD program is the dissertation defense: a formal conversation about the project, critiquing its methods, sources, arguments, findings and potentials for development into published scholarship. The candidate should notify the director and all committee members well in advance of submitting the manuscript, thus to ensure that everyone effectively coordinates their work and that they can be available for the defense. Before submitting copies to the committee, the dissertation manuscript must be formatted according to the style your committee recommends, usually MLA or Chicago Manual. Treat this step in the process as if you were submitting a manuscript to an editor for possible publication. It should be meticulously edited and proofed; all notes and bibliographical information must be carefully cross-checked and sourced. The defense date will be set after the dissertation committee has approved a completed draft of your manuscript, and the director has reported the committee's recommendation to the DGS. The SMU Graduate Program requires that notice of the pending defense be made to University faculty, and to the Deans of the College and the Graduate Program, at least a week in advance. The principal (and voting) examiners will be your dissertation committee, but note that the defense will be open to any SMU faculty, who may ask questions (but may not vote). The defense will typically last about two hours. At its conclusion, voting members of the committee deliberate (with the candidate in absentia), and their unanimous approval is required for acceptance of the dissertation and advancement to the degree. A student who fails the dissertation defense may sit for a second examination of it, but must do so within one year of the first defense date. A successful defense caps your graduate education. It certifies to the University community, and to professional colleagues worldwide, that you are well-qualified to embark on a career as both a scholar and teacher of literature in English.

#### **XV.**

##### **Visiting Assistant Professorships at SMU**

The department will offer Visiting Assistant Professor (VAP) positions allowing our most recent Ph.D. recipients the opportunity to gain teaching experience while strengthening their credentials as active scholar-teachers.

VAPs will be awarded on a competitive basis, subject to funds available to the department in a given year. Since a VAP is a faculty appointment, candidates for a VAP must have the Ph.D. in hand before the appointment begins, and candidates must present evidence of their teaching qualifications. The normal course load will be 3 sections per semester. Courses may range from First-Year Writing to upper-level literature and writing courses. These nine-month appointments will run from mid-August through mid-May.

No later than February 1<sup>st</sup> prior to the appointment's start date, the applicant must submit to the Department Chair:

- 1) a cover letter expressing interest in the appointment and outlining the applicant's qualifications and teaching interests;
- 2) a professional curriculum vitae;
- 3) three letters of recommendation from faculty members at SMU attesting to the applicant's preparation, and expectations for a completed dissertation;
- 4) three sample syllabi for courses that the applicant wishes to teach.

The Chair's Advisory Committee will evaluate applications and forward their recommendations to the department faculty for a vote. Final decisions on appointments will be announced no later than April 15<sup>th</sup>.

Visiting Assistant Professors shall enjoy other benefits of a faculty appointment, such as health insurance and access to Faculty Development Funds for conference travel and research.