

AFRICAN DIASPORA HISTORY

PHD QUALIFYING EXAMINATION GUIDELINES

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

The qualifying examination is designed to evaluate students' scholarly preparation to teach an undergraduate course in African Diaspora history through the demonstration of the ability to discuss key issues and problems in these areas. Students should demonstrate mastery of the historiography, thematic debates, and methodological approaches that are central to understanding some predefined area of African Diaspora history (e.g., African-American history, Africans in the Atlantic world, black women in the Diaspora, etc.). While exam committees are responsible for ensuring that students' preparation includes the full chronological sweep of their area of concentration, 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 their chronological and topical knowledge of the subject area is by designing a course syllabus that covers a substantial historical experience of people in the African Diaspora. The syllabus 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 and thus constitute the focus of the examination. The students' bibliography and syllabus will be circulated to all committee members in the African Diaspora field.

The student will select at least two faculty members from the African Diaspora field to serve on his/her examination committee. The student should meet with field 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 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; (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. The oral part of the exam will last no longer than 3 hours. Representatives of the major and minor fields must be present, and the outside minor field representative has the option of participating in or foregoing the oral exam. 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 in some area of African Diaspora history.

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

At least one member of the African Diaspora field must be present at the oral examination. The student is expected to demonstrate general knowledge of the historiography, major themes, and methodological approaches to some predetermined area of African Diaspora history, with the goal of integrating these into the student's teaching and research. Students are expected to develop a bibliography (approximately 20-30 books) in an area of specific interest in consultation with the examiner. The student should discuss and develop both the bibliography and the specialized area with the field committee member well in advance. Additionally, s/he must submit a final, mutually agreed-upon bibliography to the committee member no later than six weeks prior to the exam.

3. Guidelines for the prospectus

The dissertation prospectus shall consist of a 4,000-5,000-word historiographical essay that should define a research question and its significance, discuss relevant secondary literatures and methods, and the sources to be consulted. The student should be sure to identify what s/he sees as the originality and significance of the proposed dissertation topic. This document will form the basis of the second stage of the qualifying examination: the defense of the dissertation proposal. The defense will be a public discussion of the proposal and the student's plans for conceptualizing, researching, and writing the dissertation. Upon the successful completion of the defense, the student will be conferred doctoral candidacy in the History department.