

Plan B
Comprehensive Exams
(Amended January 23, 2009)

Plan Requirements and Goals:

In addition to completing the course requirements listed in the Graduate Bulletin, the Plan B MA candidates must complete written examinations and enroll in History 795 and one additional three unit course numbered from 620 to 680 in lieu of History 797 and 799 A. On their exams, candidates are expected to demonstrate a mastery of the factual knowledge and historiographical debates within two broad fields defined by geographical area and a standard chronological period with a focus on a particular methodology or theme. Plan B exists to offer greater breadth than available under the thesis plan. It should be an attractive alternative to the thesis for students considering careers in teaching or who have not determined what specialization they want to pursue in a doctoral program. Students should file a Program of Study indicating their intent to take the comprehensive examinations no later than their 4th semester in the graduate program.

Enrollment in History 795:

Only students advanced to candidacy may enroll in History 795. To enroll, a student must file "Area Studies in History (History 795)" and special studies forms with the graduate advisor. These forms identify examination fields and the examination committee.

Examining Committee:

The candidate will form a committee composed of two professors, one from each exam field. The candidate will designate one of the field supervisors as chair of the committee. The chair of the committee will serve as the instructor for History 795. The two professors will act as examiners for both fields with each developing the reading lists and questions for the exam in the field of their expertise.

Reading Lists:

Each professor on the committee will work with the candidate to prepare a reading list of approximately 40 books or their equivalent for his or her field. The readings should focus on key events, figures, trends, and historiography in each field. Candidates should expect to read a total of 80 books (or the equivalent) for the entire exam.

Selection and Definition of a Field:

With the approval of the committee, the student will select two geographical fields in standard chronological periods and indicate a methodological or thematic focus for each. Other fields and chronological periods can be chosen if the student and examining committee agree to them.

A.. GEOGRAPHICAL FIELD IN STANDARD CHRONOLOGICAL PERIOD:

Pre-Modern: African, Asian, Latin American, Middle Eastern, or World

Modern: African, Asia (China/Japan, or Southeast Asia), Latin American, Middle Eastern, or World
Ancient Near East, or Ancient Greece and Rome

Medieval, Early Modern, or Modern Europe

Colonial US to Civil War, or US from Reconstruction to Present

II. METHODOLOGICAL OR THEMATIC FOCUS OF FIELDS:

history of childhood, cultural, or intellectual history, economic history, environmental history, film history, history of foreign relations, history of gender, political history, race and ethnicity, public history, history of religion, history of science and technology, history of sexuality, social history, urban history, or war and mass violence.

Examinations:

Each professor will provide the student with study questions at least a month before the exam. Each field will draft three exam questions in his or her field based on these study questions. The student will be required to answer two questions in each field. One of the questions in each field will be about the field as a whole; the second will have a methodological or thematic focus.

Students are permitted to write their exams on a laptop and disk provided by the department. The exams will be scheduled no later than two weeks before the semester ends. The student will choose which the field in which he or she will be examined on the first day. The examination in the second field will be given the next day. Students will have four hours to complete each exam.

To pass, the student must receive a passing grade in both fields from the two professors serving on the committee. To pass with distinction requires unanimity of the committee. A student who fails one or both of the exams has one academic year to retake the exam in the field(s) he or she failed. During this time, the student must enroll in History 799C. Examinations cannot be retaken if they are failed a second time.

The grades for comprehensive exams must be transmitted to the student no later than a week after the examination is taken. The chair of the committee will inform the graduate advisor that the student has successfully passed the examinations. Completed exams will be kept on file in the Department of History office for three years