



**The Ph.D. Program in  
Modern Thought and Literature**

**A  
Resource  
for  
Advisors  
and  
Students**

**to be used in conjunction with the Ph.D. Handbook**



## MTL REQUIREMENTS

### • A Resource for Advisors and Students •

Upon arrival, incoming students are assigned first-year faculty advisors. The advisor helps each student select courses, and keeps a running check on the student's progress in completing the course and language requirements during the first year. The advisor will also consult with the student about determining an appropriate qualifying paper topic, as well as choosing readers for the qualifying paper.

Students should feel free to visit their advisors whenever they wish; two visits per quarter is probably the minimum for keeping in touch. At the end of the first year, the student should have a better sense of his/her academic trajectory and may wish to continue working with his/her initial advisor, or may decide to switch advisors. Before switching advisors, a student must consult the Director.

By the end of the second year, one of the advisor's most important tasks is to help students choose the faculty member in their special field of interest with whom they work in preparing for the oral examination, and who will normally become the dissertation director.

When meeting with an advisor, a student should keep in mind long-term issues that will arise over the course of taking classes, researching and writing. One excellent example is the issue of methodology, which should be expressed explicitly at four points: (1) as part of the qualifying paper; (2) in the interdisciplinary statement; (3) within the oral exam; and (4) as part of the dissertation. Addressing such issues frequently ensures that students are well-prepared for life-long interdisciplinary study and helps prepare for the job search.

This handbook consists of a one-page overview of requirements, followed by an expanded list that describes in the purpose and suggested timeline for each requirement.

**For more detailed information on requirements and procedures, please see the *Ph.D. Handbook*, as well as relevant University policy documents.**

## AN OVERVIEW OF THE MTL REQUIREMENTS

### FIRST YEAR

- Complete MTL 334A *and* 334B, Concepts of Modernity I and II (usually autumn, winter)
- Complete MTL 299, Edgework (usually spring)
- Complete 6-8 additional courses, roughly divided between literature and interdisciplinary components.
- Certify competency in first language *by the end of the first year*
- Choose Qualifying Paper readers, *by the end of the first year*
- Year End Report including *preliminary interdisciplinary statement*

### SECOND YEAR

- Complete English 396L “Pedagogy” (autumn)
- Complete one quarter as TA for English or another literature department (winter or spring)
- Submit Qualifying paper (*due at the beginning of the fourth week of winter quarter*)
- Complete application for departmental Ph.D. minor or thematic concentration
- Apply for candidacy; file the final interdisciplinary statement *before the start of the third year*
- Arrange for residency credit for graduate work done elsewhere (if applicable)
- Year End Report

### THIRD YEAR

- Confirm that all required coursework is completed (all incompletes cleared), and that courses fulfill the appropriate literature and interdisciplinary components
- Complete one quarter as TA in English or another department, as arranged by the student
- Certify competency in 2nd language *prior to taking the Oral Exam*
- Complete Oral Exam *by the end of spring quarter*
- Year End Report

### THIRD YEAR / FOURTH YEAR

- Develop preliminary dissertation title and select Dissertation (Reading) Committee (*due by the end of autumn quarter, fourth year*) [Students with prior MAs or other graduate degrees are strongly encouraged to form their reading committees by the end of the third year]
- File official Reading Committee form, signed by all committee members and approved by the Director (and, if relevant, approved by the Minor department)
- Submit dissertation proposal, *due at the end of Autumn Quarter, fourth year*
- File for TGR Status, *before the end of the fourth year*
- Year End Report

### FOURTH YEAR / FIFTH YEAR AND INTO THE SIXTH YEAR

- Complete Dissertation Colloquium, after completing one chapter of the dissertation (*preferably by the end of the fourth year*)
- Write Dissertation/ Defense of Dissertation
- Year End Report

*Year End Reports are required each year, even when a student is on a Leave of Absence.*

## FIRST YEAR

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➤ **Complete MTL 344A and 344B Concepts of Modernity I, and II**

This is the two-quarter required core course for the program. Concepts of Modernity I (334A) is usually offered in the autumn quarter, and Concepts of Modernity II (334B) in the winter quarter. Students are expected to complete both seminars in the first year of graduate study.

➤ **Complete MTL 299, Edgework: New Directions in the Study of Culture (spring)**

This workshop is required of all first-year Ph.D. students in MTL.

➤ **Certify competency in first language**

Students must certify competency in one foreign language by the end of the first year. This is most often accomplished by satisfactory completion of a “reading course” in one of the language departments or by passing a Ph.D. Reading Exam offered by the Language Center. Alternatively, for languages for which there is no reading course or official exam, students may submit a letter from an instructor certifying “reading competence” in that language. Students for whom English is not the first language may be certified in their native languages, without formal examination. Students who complete a foreign literature course at Stanford, numbered 100 or above, with a grade of at least B, or who can show similar coursework in a foreign literature from a prior graduate program, may be certified on that basis, if the study was completed within the preceding five years.

➤ **Choose Qualifying Paper Readers**

Students must identify two faculty members *by the end of the first year*, one of whom must be a current or recent member of the Committee in Charge, as readers for their qualifying papers. The student will be working with these readers to develop the scope of the paper. If a student wishes to work with two faculty, neither of whom is on the Committee, then that student may designate a third reader from among the Committee membership. The designation of a third reader should only be made under those circumstances. The Qualifying Paper is due at the beginning of the fourth week of the winter quarter of the second year.

*Please note that students are expected to submit a draft of the qualifying paper to their readers by early November in the second year. This means that significant thought and work on the project should be completed during the summer.*

➤ **Year End Report**

Each student must submit a year-end report, noting which requirements have been completed and which courses taken, and listing scholarly and other relevant accomplishments. *First year students must also submit a “preliminary interdisciplinary statement” to the Director.*

## SECOND YEAR

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- **Complete English 396L (autumn)**

This course provides preparation for teaching and is required of all students.
- **Complete one quarter as TA for English Department (winter or spring)**

Unless students choose to focus their literary study in a literature other than English, this TAship is almost always completed for a course in the English department. Teaching for another department must be supported by the student's advisor and approved by the Director. Students who are considering alternatives should think carefully about their career plans; without teaching experience in English and American literature courses, placement in an English department position will be much more difficult.
- **Submit Qualifying Paper (*at the beginning of the fourth week of winter quarter*)**

The qualifying paper is due on Monday of the fourth week of winter and will be read by at least two readers. Extensions are only granted for serious reasons and must be requested in writing and approved by the Director. The qualifying paper must be approved before a student can be advanced to candidacy.
- **Complete application for Departmental Ph.D. Minor or Thematic Concentration**

As part of the interdisciplinary (non-literature) component of the program, students must complete either a departmental minor *or* an approved concentration. Requirements and procedures for department minors are determined by the relevant departments. See "Explore Degrees." Alternatively, students may define their own interdisciplinary concentrations, which must be approved by their doctoral advisors and by the Director. Forms are available from the Program Office.
- **File for Ph.D. Candidacy / File Final Interdisciplinary Statement**

At the end of the second year, students apply for candidacy. The decision to advance a student to candidacy is a judgment of the faculty. The student is only admitted to candidacy if, in addition to the student's fulfilling departmental prerequisites, the faculty makes the judgment that the student has the potential to successfully complete the requirements of the degree program. All students are must apply for candidacy before the beginning of the third year in order to remain eligible for program funding. The candidacy procedures include the designation of a minor or a concentration, and a brief description of the student's interdisciplinary focus (the "interdisciplinary statement"), which should be a revision and update of the preliminary statement submitted at the end of the first year.
- **Arrange for residency credit for graduate work done elsewhere (if applicable)**

Students who have completed graduate level courses elsewhere are strongly encouraged to transfer units and residency. This will help the student arrive at "TGR" status earlier, which is beneficial to the Program and the student. Students who come to Stanford with an MA may transfer up to 45 quarter units of credit. [One semester unit is equivalent to 1.5 quarter units.] Forms are available from the Program Office.
- **Year End Report**

Each student must submit a year-end report noting which requirements have been completed and listing scholarly and other relevant accomplishments.

## THIRD YEAR

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### ➤ **Prior to taking the Oral Exam**

Students should ensure that all “incompletes” are cleared, and should consult with their advisors to make sure that all required courses have been completed or will be completed before the end of the year. It is important that students designate which courses will count toward the “literature” requirement, and which toward the “interdisciplinary” requirement and that all required courses for the minor / concentration be designated, usually in the interdisciplinary component.

### ➤ **Complete one quarter as TA in English (or in another department)**

Each student should arrange to TA for one quarter in the third year. The decision of whether to teach for the English Department or another department may depend on the student’s academic career plans. *Students who wish to TA in a department other than English must make those arrangements themselves. MTL has the funding, but cannot provide the courses.* The date of the student’s Oral Exam may play a role in determining in which quarter the student wishes to teach.

### ➤ **Certify competency in a 2nd language**

Students must certify competency in a second foreign language by the end of the third year, *before completing the Oral Exam (unless an exception is specifically granted).*

### ➤ **Complete the University Oral Exam**

Students should have an Orals Committee designated early in the third year and should choose a “field title” describing the field of inquiry. The committee consists of four faculty members—at least three must be members of the Academic Council at Stanford (regular, tenure-track faculty appointments). Permission to include a non-Academic Council member must be secured from the Director as well as the student’s primary advisor. Arrangements must also be made for a “University Chair” (a.k.a. the “timekeeper”). Generally students prefer to ask a faculty member with whom they have had some interaction; they should seek advice from their primary advisors about whom to ask to perform this duty. If needed, the Program Administrator can assist in finding a University Chair.

If the student has enrolled for a departmental minor, that department may specify that one member of the Orals Committee be a representative of that department. The minor department must also approve the makeup of the Committee and the Chair or Director of Graduate Studies must sign the University Oral Exam form.

Often students break down the field of study into sub-fields—sometimes with one member of the Committee “responsible” for each field, as a way to help develop a reading list. Most students take their oral exams in spring quarter, but sometimes faculty schedules may make it desirable to schedule the exam in the winter.

### ➤ **Year End Report**

Each student must submit a year-end report noting which requirements have been completed and listing scholarly and other relevant accomplishments.

## THIRD YEAR / FOURTH YEAR

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### ➤ **Select Dissertation Committee**

After consultation with the primary advisor, a student should approach members of the faculty with whom he/she wishes to work to ask if they are interested and able to be members of the Dissertation (Reading) Committee. Usually these are faculty members who sat on the student's Oral Exam, but not necessarily. Students should make every effort to see that at least two of the members are faculty who will in all likelihood remain at Stanford during the dissertation-writing years.

#### **File Reading Committee Form, by the end of autumn of the fourth year**

The Dissertation Committee consists of at least three members of the faculty: the primary dissertation advisor and two others. At least two of the three faculty members must be members of the Academic Council at Stanford (regular, tenure-track faculty appointments). Permission to include a non-Academic Council member must be secured from both the Director and the student's primary advisor. *Each faculty member must agree in writing to sit on the committee.*

Students may have more than three members on their Dissertation Committees if they wish, but they should consider carefully before doing so.

The Registrar's official "Doctoral Dissertation Reading Committee" form must be submitted to the Program office.

*~ Students with prior graduate degrees are encouraged to form their committees early and are expected to advance to TGR as soon as they have constituted their reading committees, assuming all required courses have been completed.*

### ➤ **Develop Dissertation Proposal by the end of autumn of the fourth year**

Following the Oral Exam, the student should begin preparing a dissertation topic proposal. The recommended length for the proposal is 5 pages double-spaced (max 8 pages). It should additionally include a bibliography. The proposal should outline the topic and the approach and its significance. This proposal is submitted to the student's committee and the Director along with the approval form, which will be filed in the Program office after all faculty have signed off.

### ➤ **File for TGR Status before the end of the fourth year**

*It is to the student's benefit to reach TGR status as quickly as possible.* To file for TGR status, a student must have completed 135 units (including transfer credit), must have an official Reading Committee form on file, and must have completed all coursework required for the degree. [Students with prior graduate credit may advance to TGR as early as spring of the third year.]

### ➤ **Year End Report**

Each student must submit a year-end report noting which requirements have been completed, progress on the dissertation, and listing scholarly and other relevant accomplishments.

## FOURTH YEAR / FIFTH YEAR / AND INTO THE SIXTH YEAR

### ➤ **Complete Dissertation Colloquium**

The Dissertation Colloquium takes place after the proposal has been approved and the student has completed one full chapter (usually at the end of the fourth year of study, and no later than the beginning of the fifth). As soon as one chapter has been completed, the student sets up a date and time to meet with the Dissertation Committee for one hour to discuss the work accomplished and plans for completing the rest of the dissertation. The Colloquium should be a session during which the student solicits and receives advice; it is not an exam.

### ➤ **Write Dissertation**

Students see their committee members regularly to keep them abreast of developments. *All Committee members should be consulted during the writing process*, though it is natural to work more closely with certain mentors.

### ➤ **Funding Beyond the Fifth Year**

Since most students require at least one additional year to complete their dissertation projects, they need to consider opportunities for additional funding.

- The Stanford Humanities Center coordinates a number of these fellowships (Whiting, Mellon, etc.) and provides informational sessions for students.
- There are several program-related competitive dissertation fellowships for which MTL students may be eligible, depending on the focus of their work (e.g., CCSRE, the Clayman Institute for Gender Studies, the Center for Ethics and Society).
- U.S. citizens and permanent residents are eligible to apply for “Work/Study” funding support (the “work” is the student’s research and writing).
- Outside dissertation-year fellowships are rarer, but there are opportunities that may be appropriate for certain students.
- Students may be able to secure TAs in departments or programs. Even a one-quarter appointment can be helpful in supplementing other sources of funding (e.g., Work/Study funding may be awarded only for one or two quarters). The best bet for discovering such opportunities is for students to apprise their committee members and other faculty with whom they have mentoring relationships of their interest in teaching.

*~ If a student has exhausted all funding options and is not yet ready to file the dissertation, a Leave of Absence may be requested from the Director.*

### ➤ **The Dissertation Defense**

Dissertations in Modern Thought and Literature conclude with a two-hour defense. The first hour is open to the public and includes a brief presentation (15 minutes) of the dissertation on the part of the Ph.D. candidate. The second hour is reserved to the candidate and his/her Dissertation Committee. [*Unlike a number of Ph.D. programs at Stanford, the MTL dissertation defense requirement is a program requirement only and does not fulfill the University Oral Exam requirement.*]

### ➤ **Year End Report**

Each student must submit a year-end report, **noting progress on the dissertation and other accomplishments**. *This is required, even if a student is on a Leave of Absence.*

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