

GRADUATE STUDIES IN ENGLISH
SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY CARBONDALE

MA Comprehensive Examination Reading Lists / Updated February 2015

To be eligible to take the MA Comprehensive Examination a student must have completed with not less than a “B” average, at least 24 hours of graduate work toward the MA in English and must have satisfied all other degree requirements including the foreign-language requirement. (Exceptions must be granted by the Director of Graduate Studies) Not later than the second week of the semester in which the student plans to take the examination, he or she must file an application with the Director of Graduate Studies (forms are available in the Graduate Studies office and online). Typically, MA comprehensive exams will occur during the seventh or eighth week of the semester. The exam is five hours long.

Students taking the MA Comprehensive Exam will choose six preferred areas on which to write a five-hour examination. These six areas must be declared when they submit the Master's Comprehensive Examination Application Form.

1. Old and Middle English Literatures
2. Renaissance and 17th-Century English Literature
3. Restoration and 18th-Century English Literature
4. 19th-Century English Literature
5. American Literature before 1900
6. American Literature since 1900
7. Modern British Literature
8. Modern Continental Literature

The Director of Graduate Studies will narrow the list of six to four and inform the students who applied to take the exam of those four areas. Students may expect questions on specific works as well as questions that cross from genre to genre and/or from period to period. All questions, however, will be based entirely upon the readings in this list. The examinations will be evaluated by an MA Exam Committee of at least four members of the graduate faculty, and a majority vote determines pass or fail for the entire examination, with the Director of Graduate Studies interceding in the event of a deadlock. A student who fails the examination may take it a second time. A third examination may be allowed, but only by special permission of the Director of Graduate Studies. If the examination committee deems it useful, an oral examination may be scheduled after the written examination to determine the grade for the examination. The entire examination will be given a qualitative grade as follows:

- 1 – Pass with Distinction
- 2 – Pass
- 3 – Low Pass
- 4 – Fail

Number grades will be forwarded to students in the results letter along with a brief explanation of the grade's meaning. If the student has applied to the PhD program at SIU, the examination

results will be placed in the student's file and forwarded to Graduate Studies Committee. The grades will have specific meaning when the Graduate Studies Committee reads the file:

- 1 – Equivalent to a “Strongly Recommend” endorsement
- 2 – Equivalent to a “Recommend” endorsement
- 3 – Equivalent to a “Recommend with Reservations” endorsement

Any student choosing to take the MA Qualifying Examination must also file with the Graduate School a clean and properly formatted research paper which has earned the grade of *B* or better in a 500-level English course. For specific instructions, refer to the *Guidelines for the Preparation of Dissertations, Theses, and Research Papers*, available in the Graduate Studies office. For deadlines, see Graduation Deadlines for Graduate Students, regularly posted in the Department. The research paper must be cleared with Graduate School Records well in advance of the deadline.

http://www.siu.edu/gradschl/research_guide.htm

The MA Comprehensive Reading List contains both required primary readings as well as recommended secondary source material. The secondary sources offer students a chance to research the important literary, critical, social context for each area. While students should have a thorough knowledge of the literary works on the list, they should not feel compelled to exhaust the secondary sources, but to use them as a insightful study aid.

Old and Middle English Literatures

Primary Readings

Old English

Beowulf (E. Talbot Donaldson translation only, published by Norton)

Judith

“The Battle of Brunanburh”; “The Dream of the Rood”; “The Battle of Maldon”; “The Wanderer”; “The Seafarer”; “The Wife's Lament”; “Caedmon's Hymn”

Middle English

Chaucer: from *The Canterbury Tales*: General Prologue, Knight's Tale, Miller's Prologue and Tale, Reeve's Prologue and Tale, Cook's Tale, Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale, Franklin's Prologue and Tale, Pardoner's Prologue and Tale, Retraction; “Book of the Duchess,” “Parliament of Fowles”

Prose: Malory, “The Death of Arthur” (Book 8 in *Works*)

Romance: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

Drama: *Second Shepherd's Play*, *York Crucifixion*, *Croxton Play of the Sacrament*

Allegory: *Pearl*

Lyric: sel from Luria, M., ed., *Middle English Lyrics*, Norton

Recommended Secondary Sources

Old English

Introduction and commentaries in *Eight OE Poems*

Introduction to Beowulf in Donaldson's translation

A New Critical History of OE Literature, by Stanley Greenfield and Daniel Calder

C.L. Wrenn, *A Study of OE Literature*

Middle English

Selections from the following: *Chaucer and the Social Contest*, Peggy Knapp, *Cambridge Companion to Chaucer*, 2nd. ed.

Introductions to relevant works and genres in *Medieval English Literature*, Thomas J. Garbáty

Renaissance and 17th-Century English Literature

Primary Readings

Sidney: *Astrophel and Stella*; *The Defence of Poesie*

Wroth: *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*: “Am I Thus Conquered” and “False Hope Which Feeds but to Destroy”; *A Crown of Sonnets Dedicated to Love*: “In This Strange Labyrinth How Shall I Turn?”

Spenser: *The Faerie Queene*, Books 1-3

Shakespeare: *Henry V*; *Merchant of Venice*; *Twelfth Night*; *Hamlet*; *Measure for Measure*; *Sonnets*; *Venus and Adonis*

Jonson: *Bartholomew Fair*; *Volpone*; “To Penshurst”

Carew, “A Rapture”

Herrick: “To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time,” “Corinna’s Going A-Maying”; “The Hock-Cart”

Donne: “The Sun Rising”; “The Flea”; “A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning”; “Elegy 19: To His Mistress Going to Bed”; “Good Friday, 1613. Riding Westward”; Holy Sonnet 14

Lanyer, *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, “The Description of Cooke-ham”

Herbert: “The Collar”; “Love (III)”; “The Altar”; “The Bunch of Grapes”; “Jordan (1)”; “The Sacrifice”

Marvell: “The Garden”; “To His Coy Mistress”; “Horatian Ode upon Cromwell’s Return from Ireland”; “Upon Appleton House”

Milton: *Paradise Lost*

Recommended Secondary Sources

Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City*

Jean Howard and Phyllis Rackin, *Engendering a Nation*

Michael Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England*

Richard Rambuss, *Closet Devotions*

Regina Schwartz, *Sacramental Poetics at the Dawn of Secularism*

Stanley Fish, *Surprised by Sin*

Peter Herman, *Destabilizing Milton*

Feisal Mohamed, *Milton and the Post-Secular Present: Ethics, Politics, Terrorism*

Restoration and Eighteenth-Century English Literature

Primary Readings

Wycherley, *The Country Wife*
 Dryden, *Mac Flecknoe*
 Behn, *Oroonoko*
 Pope, *The Rape of the Lock*, *An Essay on Criticism*, Epistle I of *An Essay on Man*, and *Epistle to Arbuthnot*
 Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*
 Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* and "A Modest Proposal"
 Gay, *The Beggar's Opera*
 Johnson, *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, *Life of Savage*, and *Ramblers* #4 and 60
 Gray, *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*
 Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas on the Sublime and Beautiful*
 Goldsmith, *The Deserted Village* and *She Stoops to Conquer*
 Burney, *Evelina*
 Smith, "Written in the Church-Yard at Middleton in Sussex" and "On Being Cautioned against Walking on an Headland"
 Blake, *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*
 Austen, *Northanger Abbey*

Recommended Secondary Sources

Margaret Anne Doody, *The Daring Muse: Augustan Poetry Reconsidered*
 Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, chapters 1-3
 Nancy Armstrong, Introduction to *Desire and Domestic Fiction*
 Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction*
 Markman Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility*, esp. chapters 1 and 2
 Markman Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction*, esp. early chapters
 Richard Holmes, *Dr. Johnson and Mr. Savage*
 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men*, chapter 3
 Dennis Todd, *Imagining Monsters*, esp. chapters 1 and 5
 John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, esp. Parts I and IV

19th-Century English Literature

Primary Readings

Blake: from *Songs of Innocence*: "The Lamb"; "Holy Thursday"; "The Chimney-Sweeper"; "Nurse's Song"; from *Songs of Experience*: "The Tyger"; "Holy Thursday"; "The Chimney-Sweeper"; "Nurse's Song"; "The Garden of Love"; "London"; "The Poison Tree"
 Wordsworth: "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads*; "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey"; "Michael"; "Ode: Intimations of Immortality"
 Coleridge: "Frost at Midnight"; *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*; "Dejection: An Ode"
 Byron: from *Don Juan*: Dedication and Canto I

Shelley: “Mont Blanc”; “Ode to the West Wind”
 Keats: “Ode on a Grecian Urn”; “Ode to a Nightingale”; “To Autumn”
 Tennyson: “The Lady of Shalot”; “Ulysses”; from *In Memoriam*: Prologue, 1-7, 23-35, 53-57, 106-120, 124, Epilogue
 Browning: “Fra Lippo Lippi”; “An Epistle of Karshish”
 Carlyle: from *Sartor Resartus*: Chap. 7 (“The Everlasting No”) and Chap. 9 (“The Everlasting Yea”)
 Ruskin: from *The Stones of Venice*: Vol. 2, Chap. 6: “The Savageness of Gothic Architecture”
 Austen: *Pride and Prejudice*
 Dickens: *Great Expectations*
 George Eliot: *The Mill on the Floss*

Recommended Secondary Sources

Richard D. Altick, *Victorian People and Ideas* (Norton, 1973)
 Marilyn Gaull, *Romanticism: The Human Context* (Norton, 1988)
 Basil Willey, *Nineteenth Century Studies* (Columbia UP, 1949)
 Basil Willey, *More Nineteenth Century Studies* (Columbia UP, 1956)

19th-Century American Literature

Primary Readings

All of the following:

Hannah Foster, *The Coquette*
 Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*
 Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*
 Walt Whitman, *Song of Myself*
 Emily Dickinson, selected poems
 Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*
 Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*
 Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw*
 Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*
 Kate Chopin, *The Awakening*

Plus any one of the following:

Susanna Rowson, *Charlotte Temple*
 William Hill Brown, *The Power of Sympathy*
 Charles Brockden Brown, *Wieland*

Plus any two of the following:

James Fenimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans*
 Edgar Allan Poe, “Ligeia,” “The Black Cat,” “The Fall of the House of Usher,” “William Wilson,” “The Gold-Bug”

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*
 Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The Poet,” “The American Scholar,” and “Self-Reliance”
 Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*
 Nathaniel Hawthorne, “Young Goodman Brown,” “My Kinsman, Major Molineux,”
 “Rappacini’s Daughter,” and “The Birth-Mark” **or** *The Blithedale Romance*
 Herman Melville, “Benito Cereno” **or** *Billy Budd*

Plus any two of the following:

Mark Twain, *Pudd’nhead Wilson*
 Charles Chesnutt, *The Conjure Woman and Other Conjure Tales*
 Sarah Orne Jewett, *The Country of Pointed Firs*
 Frank Norris, *McTeague*
 Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie*

Recommended Secondary Sources

Leslie Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*
 Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890*
 Cathy Davidson, *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America*
 Michael Rogin, *Subversive Genealogies: The Politics and Art of Herman Melville*
 Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860*
 Gillian Brown, *Domestic Individualism: Imagining Self in Nineteenth-Century America*
 Karen Sanchez-Eppler, *Touching Liberty: Abolition, Feminism, and the Politics of the Body*
 Eric Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature*
 Amy Kaplan, *The Social Construction of American Realism*
 Amy Kaplan, “Nation, Region, Empire” (from *The Columbia History of the American Novel*)
 Jay Fliegelman, *Declaring Independence: Jefferson, Natural Language, and the Culture of Performance*
 Hazel Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist*
 Richard Brodhead, *Cultures of Letters: Scenes of Reading and Writing in Nineteenth-Century America*
 John Carlos Rowe, *Literary Culture and U.S. Imperialism: From the Revolution to World War II*

Irish Studies and Literature

(Irish literature is not treated as a separate area on the examination. However, students may discuss Irish writers in response to examination questions. The following primary and secondary readings may be studied in preparation for and discussed in examination questions on their historical era. For example, Jonathan Swift may be discussed on an exam of Restoration and 18th-century literature, James Joyce for Modern British, and so forth.)

General Background

Moody and Martin, *The Course of Irish History*

Seamus Dean, *A Short History of Irish Literature*
 Declan Kiberd, *Irish Classics*

Primary Readings (Pre-1900)

Primary:

Jonathan Swift, "A Modest Proposal," *Gulliver's Travels*
 Maria Edgeworth, *Castle Rackrent*
 William Carleton, *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* (selection of 3 or 4 tales)
 Somerville and Ross, *The Real Charlotte*
 George Moore, *The Untilled Field*
 Poems by Aogán Ó Rathaille, Brian Merriman, Thomas Moore, James Clarence Mangan, "The Spirit of the Nation" poets

Recommended Secondary Sources (Pre-1900)

Joep Leerssen, *Mere Irish and Fíor-Ghael: Studies. Prior to the Nineteenth Century*
 Joep Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination: Patterns in the Nineteenth Century*
 Thomas Flanagan, *The Irish Novelists 1800-1850*
 David Lloyd, *Nationalism and Minor Literature*
 Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*
 Terry Eagleton, "Form and Ideology in the Anglo-Irish Novel" in *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*

Primary Readings (Post-1900)

W. B. Yeats, selected poems
 James Joyce, *Dubliners*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*
 J. M. Synge, *Riders to the Sea*, *The Playboy of the Western World*
 Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*, *Krapp's Last Tape*
 Short fiction by Frank O'Connor, Sean O'Faolain, Mairtin Ó Cadhain, Elizabeth Bowen, Mary Lavin, Edna O'Brien, William Trevor
 Poetry by Louis MacNeice, Patrick Kavanagh, Thomas Kinsella, John Montague, Eavan Boland, Nuala Ni Dhomhnaill, Seamus Heaney, Paul Muldoon

Recommended Secondary Sources (Post-1900)

Richard Fallis, *The Irish Renaissance*
 Hugh Kenner, *A Colder Eye: The Modern Irish Writers*
 Thomas Kinsella, *The Dual Tradition*
 Dillon Johnston, *Irish Poetry after Joyce*
 Edna Longley, *The Living Stream: Literature and Revisionism in Ireland*

American Literature since 1900

Primary Readings

Stevens: "Sunday Morning"

Williams: "The Young Housewife"; "This is Just to Say"; "Of Asphodel, that Greeny Flower"

Lowell: "The Quaker Graveyard at Nantucket"; "For the Union Dead"

Bishop: "The Fish"; "Filling Station"; "Sestina"; "Poem"

O'Neill: *Long Day's Journey into Night*

Hwang: *M. Butterfly*

Fitzgerald: *The Great Gatsby*

Faulkner: *The Sound and the Fury*

Pynchon: *The Crying of Lot 49*

Morrison: *Beloved*

Recommended Secondary Texts

None

Modern British Literature**Primary Readings**

Eliot: "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"; *The Waste Land*; "Tradition and the Individual Talent"

Auden: "Spain 1937"; "In Memory of W. B. Yeats"; "The Shield of Achilles"; "Musée des Beaux Arts"; "September 1, 1939"

Shaw: *Major Barbara*

Lawrence: *Women in Love* or Forster: *A Passage to India*

Conrad: "Heart of Darkness"

Woolf: *Mrs. Dalloway*; "Modern Fiction"; *A Room of One's Own*

Larkin: "Church Going"; "The Whitsun Weddings"; "High Windows"

Duffy: "Standing Female Nude"; "I Remember Me"; "Warming Her Pearls"; "The Grammar of Light"; or Gunn: "Elvis Presley," "A Map of the City," "Black Jackets," and "The Missing"

Pinter: *The Birthday Party* or *The Homecoming*

Amis: *Money* or McEwan: *Enduring Love*

Smith: *White Teeth* or Byatt: *Possession*

Rushdie: *Midnight's Children*

Recommended Secondary Sources

Baldick, Chris. *The Oxford English Literary History*, Vol. 10, "The Modern Movement." Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004.

Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." In *Illuminations*. ed. Hannah Arendt. trans. Harry Zohn London; Fontana, 1973.

Bradbury, Malcolm. *The Modern British Novel, 1878-2001*. rev. ed. New York: Penguin, 2001.

Levenson, Michael. *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*. Cambridge UP, 1999.

Lodge, David. "Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism." In *Working with Structuralism* Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981.

Manand, Louis. *Discovering Modernism: T.S. Eliot and His Context*. New York: Oxford UP, 1987.

Nicholls, Peter. *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* London: Macmillan, 1995.

Perkins, David. *A History of Modern Poetry*. Vols. 1 and 2. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1976/1987.

Modern Continental Literature

Primary Readings

Kafka: *The Trial*

Camus: *The Stranger*; *The Fall*

Sartre: *No Exit*

Grass: *The Tin Drum*

Kundera: *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*

Coetzee: *Waiting for the Barbarians*

Ibsen: *A Doll House*

Brecht: *Galileo*

Beckett: *Endgame*

Duras: *Moderato Cantabile*

Rimbaud: five poems including "The Drunken Boat"; "Night in Hell"; "Vowels"

Rilke: "Music"; "Breathing of Statues"; "Archaic Torso of Apollo"; two sonnets from "Sonnets to Orpheus"

Akhmatova: "Requiem"

Yevtushenko: "Babii Yas"

Cesaire: *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*

Walcott: *Star Apple Kingdom*

Malraux: *Man's Fate*

Eco: *The Name of the Rose*

Recommended Secondary Texts

None