ASSESSMENT OF SECOND EXAMINATION LEARNING GOALS

Ph.D. PROGRAM
IN HISPANIC AND LUSO-BRAZILIAN LITERATURES AND LANGUAGES

As of 2010, the Second Examination goals were defined in the following terms:

For the Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian linguistics subspecialty:

In preparation for the second examination, students develop annotated bibliographies and acquire a high level of competency in the traditional and current pursuits of the two areas of concentration which they have selected in consultation with the Examination Committee. Through research and writing of an 8000-word paper, they demonstrate their ability to conduct well-designed, thoroughly implemented original research and to make significant contributions to the field of concentration. The oral presentation of their research prepares them to present their work in professional forums.

For the Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian literatures subspecialty:

The Second Examination is designed to evaluate the students’ general knowledge of Hispanic or Luso-Brazilian cultural and literary traditions as well as their capacity for critical thinking. The exam is based on a reading list for each of the six areas of the above-mentioned literatures. In preparation for the Second Examination students must develop a solid grounding in all periods of the Hispanic or Luso-Brazilian literatures from the Middle Ages to the present.

In 2011, HLBLL’s Curriculum Committee assessed the Second Examination learning goals. The goals set for the linguistics subspecialty were deemed appropriate but a change in the literature subspecialty goals was proposed. The change was approved by HLBLL’s Executive Committee in Spring 2011. The goals for the Second Examination now read as follows:
The Second Examination is designed to evaluate the students’ in-depth knowledge of two areas of Hispanic or Luso-Brazilian cultural and literary traditions, their ability to conduct bibliographic research, and their capacity for critical thinking and academic writing. The exam has three parts: two are based on faculty-prepared reading lists for each of the two areas selected by the student; the third is based on two reading lists (one of primary sources and another with critical/theoretical sources) prepared by the student in consultation with her/his Examination Committee.

In Fall 2012, the Curriculum and Executive Committees reviewed the Second Examination learning goals as well as the structure of the Second Examination and found that the changes introduced in 2011 had been positive. The Curriculum and Executive Committees grounded their deliberations, first, in students’ exam results and found that the quality of the work reveals a more sophisticated engagement with the texts and with the cultural tradition to which they belong). Second, the information available on students’ transition from Second Examination to dissertation was also considered and evidence was found that students are taking less time between completion of the Second Examination and presentation of their dissertation proposal. Both committees found that the changes have led to a better preparation of the students and a more effective assessment method.

Throughout 2013 and 2014, the Curriculum and Executive Committees will carefully review the development of students who have been evaluated through the recently implemented assessment system. Members of these committees will conduct interviews with students as well as with dissertation advisors in order to evaluate whether the new assessment method continues to better prepare students to think critically and produce high quality academic writing and whether students’ time to completion significantly improves.

Respectfully submitted,

José del Valle, Executive Officer
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