

**University of Pittsburgh Dietrich School of Arts and  
Sciences Department of Slavic Languages & Literatures  
Graduate Student Handbook**

**I. Requirements**

**Literature MA**

- 36 graduate credits
- Introduction to Literary Studies
- One course in Slavic historical linguistics OR one course in descriptive Russian linguistics
- Reading knowledge of a research language other than English or Russian (with DGS approval)
- The **Comprehensive** Examination

**Literature PhD**

- 72 graduate credits (36 beyond the MA), of which 12 may be dissertation credits; at least 60 credits must be completed by the end of the semester in which the examination is to be taken.
- One course in Slavic historical linguistics AND one course in descriptive Russian Linguistics.
- 9-15 graduate credits (within the 72-credit total) in an approved second area (e.g., Cultural Studies; Digital Studies and Methods; European Literature; Film and Media Studies; Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies; Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies; a second Slavic language/literature/culture).
- The **Qualifying** Examination

**PhD in Film Studies with a Concentration in Slavic** (as the Associated Department)

The PhD in Film Studies at the University of Pittsburgh is an interdisciplinary and interdepartmental degree that stresses the history, theory, and aesthetics of international cinema, video, television, and new media. While students will earn a PhD in Film and Media Studies, granted by the Film and Media Studies Program (FMSP), they will also be full members of the Slavic Department, fulfilling its requirements (many of which will overlap with those in FMSP). The name of the Associated Department will appear as an Area of Concentration on the student's transcript. Thus, the student graduating with a PhD in Film and Media Studies will be doubly qualified: in FMSP as well as in a secondary area. See the FMSP website (<http://www.filmstudies.pitt.edu/>) for more information about the PhD in Film and Media Studies with a Concentration in Slavic. Applicants interested in this program must apply through FMSP.

FMSP PhD students who concentrate in Slavic should take the Department's **four graduate offerings** in Film Studies:

- RUSS 2648 Lumiere to Lenin
- RUSS 2639 Stalin at the Movies
- RUSS 2640 Cinema of Thaw and Stagnation
- RUSS 2642 Perestroika and Beyond

**Graduate Certificates**

Most graduate students in both the Slavic-only and FMSP-plus-Slavic programs earn graduate Certificates in one or more of the approved second areas listed above under **Literature PhD**.

**More General Information**

Recent graduate seminars have included the following topics (rough chronological order):

- Medieval Rus'
- Russian Historical Grammar
- The Russian Novel
- Pushkin
- Russian Speculative Philosophy
- Silver Age
- Formalism and Structuralism
- 20th Century Drama
- Bakhtin and the Novel
- Stalinist Culture of the 1930's
- The Anti-Imperialist Empire: Formations of Second-World Culture
- Outside Capital: Postmodernism as a Second-World Practice
- Post-Soviet Russian Cinema
- Imaginative Geographies
- Computational Methods in the Humanities

Students may be admitted to candidacy only after the required research language requirement has been satisfied.

Graduate students are required to have completed all the following steps in order to be admitted to candidacy:

- Before the end of the student's first year in the program, submit to the graduate faculty a one-page rationale, explaining the relevance of the proposed research language to the student's scholarship. The research language must be approved by the graduate faculty before the next two steps may be undertaken.
- Achieve reading knowledge of the proposed research language, to be demonstrated by a test administered or arranged by the Department or by completing the equivalent of a second-year college-level course in the language with at least a B+.
- Include in the PhD Qualifying Bibliography examination at minimum five annotated entries to demonstrate ongoing engagement with scholarship in the research language.

Students may satisfy the research language requirement in one of the following three ways:

- A grade of at least B+ in the fourth semester (second semester of second year) of the chosen language
- The regular research-competence exam
- A graduate level course in the chosen language that includes a) foreign-language research for a paper and b) a letter from the instructor (3-4 sentences maximum) to the effect that the student is competent to conduct research in the language.

In consultation with the DGS, the students' choice of foreign language (other than English or Russian) must be based on a rationale that the proposed language relates directly to the anticipated research agenda.

## **II. Advisement**

It is the responsibility of all degree students to consult each term with the graduate advisor concerning courses to be taken during the following term, and to review current progress toward

the degree. While effort will be made to accommodate student interests and preferences, the graduate advisor has the authority to exercise judgment as to course load and selection. Only the graduate advisor is authorized to sign registration forms. The chair will not sign registration forms when the student has failed to consult with the graduate advisors during the regular advising period.

### III. Directed Study

Directed Study courses with various credit loads, are regularly included among Department course listings. The purpose of such automatic listings is in part for clerical convenience and is not to be construed as a blanket right to take a Directed Study course in a given term. In principle, students will be advised to take regular department offerings unless these clearly coincide with courses already taken. This principle holds regardless of the status of the student concerned.

The opportunity to take Directed Study courses is usually extended to advanced (normally, PhD) students with special needs and interests not met by departmental offerings. Occasionally students who, through no fault of their, have been unable to take a course required for a degree may petition to take such a course through Directed Study. Otherwise, Directed Study is not offered in subject areas regularly taught by the Department. To obtain approval for a Directed Study course, a student must present to the graduate adviser a) sufficient rationale; b) a statement from the faculty member who has agreed to undertake and supervise the Directed Study.

A faculty member agreeing to undertake supervision of Directed Study should, as a minimum, provide a list of readings or agree to supervise progress through a student-provided list. Except for dissertation research, the Directed Study course should typically result in a graded research paper of significant length or in a graded comprehensive examination.

An exception may be made when the student has satisfied all course and credit requirements (at least 60 credits) for the comprehensive examinations and wishes to enroll for 3 credits toward preparing for examinations scheduled in the same term. In such a case, the student registers for 3 credits of Directed Study with the examination chair and receives a grade for the course (Credit/Audit) according to whether the examinations are passed.

Students may not undertake study under the rubric Dissertation Research until they have been formally advanced to candidacy. The only credits for independent work that count toward the degree requirements are for directed study (SLAV 2902), comprehensive examinations (SLAV 3209), and dissertation work (FTDA 3999).

### IV. Transfer & Credit Policies

- Transfer credit from another institution will be allowed for no more than **12 credits** total toward the MA, and an **additional 6** toward the PhD
- In certain cases (for example, when the credits are old or from an institution with which the department is not familiar), the matter of transfer credit is decided only after the first semester of work or by examination
- MA transfers from other institutions may be required to take the Departmental MA examinations, should their training prove inadequate for doctoral-level work. Until such time as these examinations are successfully passed, the student will be considered to be on provisional

status in the PhD program. What constitutes "inadequate training" is to be decided by Departmental committee

- Students desiring to spend an academic semester abroad in pre-approved programs may have credit from such programs applied at the rate of no more than **9 credits** per term of study. Typically, such study is undertaken to establish a second area or to improve language ability. Students whose fulfillment of specific course requirements is made more difficult by participation in approved study-abroad programs may apply to the graduate committee for a waiver of requirement, to be considered on a case-by-case basis.

### V. Teaching Assistantships & Other Awards

- Teaching assistantships and fellowships, and other Department awards, are made principally based on three criteria: academic merit; teaching effectiveness, as determined by the graduate studies committee; and an overall strategy of providing support to as many qualified graduate students as possible, including incoming students.
- Any graduate fellowships under the specific control of the department (currently, the Elagin Fellowship) are awarded as part of this overall strategy: i.e., they are considered interchangeable with teaching assistantships and carry the same time limitations. When calculating time limitations on departmental support, the Department historically has considered outside fellowship support as well, but there is no established policy on this matter
- The following general policies are in effect:
  - Students who maintain at least a B+ average and have satisfactory teaching evaluations will usually be continued in a following year, up to the limit of support.
  - Students earning less than a straight B average in the department in a given term are not eligible for TA-ship renewal, and risk losing the TA-ship at the end of the current term.
- Teaching assistantships are usually not awarded unless a student needs course credits toward a degree, and they are not usually awarded in excess of needed credit support.
- For a teaching assistantship to be renewed, a student is expected to be making normal progress toward the degree appropriate to the given level of support. Normal progress means a) taking at least 9 credits counting toward the degree in any given term; b) taking the MA exams within two years, and the PhD within two years beyond the MA
- Incompletes in courses that bring a TA below the 9-credit minimum must be made up before the beginning of a subsequent academic year, or the teaching assistantship will be forfeited.

### VI. Examinations

**Examination Format.** Graduate students will, as part of their PhD program, pass two sets of examinations: the Comprehensive Examination and the PhD Qualifying Examination. They shall be taken in this order and in conformity with the timeline given below.

**The Comprehensive Examination** will be a typed examination given in take-home format. The exams shall be typed in English. The questions will address the following three discrete historical periods:

- Russian literature through the 18th Century
- The 19th Century and Early 20th Century
- Soviet and Post-Soviet Russian literature (1917-present)

The Comprehensive Examination will be based on the [Departmental MA Reading List](#).

**The PhD Qualifying Examination** will consist of typed and oral segments. The typed examination will be administered in take-home format and completed within two weeks. All sources used in the composition of answers will be documented according to the standards of scholarly writing in the field. The exams shall be typed in English. The typed questions will be organized to address three discrete areas of specialization, formulated individually for each student within the following parameters:

- Genre(s) or medium/media
- Author(s) or producer(s)
- Historical period(s)

**The Qualifying Examination for the Film PhD student** consists of examinations in three areas chosen by the advisor and the faculty:

- Film Genre(s) or medium/media
- Film Author(s) or producer(s)
- Historical Period(s)

Candidates are expected to demonstrate mastery of the appropriate body of theory relevant to each area.

The typed examinations will be followed by an **oral examination**, to be administered by the candidate's examination committee and all members of the Slavic department graduate faculty who wish to participate. The oral examination will be scheduled to follow the typed examinations in as timely a fashion as possible.

#### **Qualifying PhD Examination and Prospectus: Candidate and Committee Responsibilities**

Graduate students will choose an adviser as soon as possible after passing the MA Comprehensive Examination and in consultation with the advisor will form a dissertation committee. For **Slavic PhD** students, the committee will consist of three members of the Slavic graduate faculty and one external (that is, non-Slavic) faculty member. For PhD students in the **Film and Media Studies Program (FMSP)** with a Slavic concentration, the committee will consist of three members of FMSP and one non-FMSP (and non-Slavic) colleague.

- Students' three areas of specialization should be chosen within the parameters listed above under Examination Format. The three specific areas must be approved by the advisor. The advisor will chair the examination committee.
- Students will develop reading lists for the three areas of specialization. These lists will constitute a minimal basis upon which students will be tested and are not to be considered exhaustive. The development of these reading lists is to be supervised by the dissertation adviser in consultation with the members of the examination committee. Both the adviser and the committee must approve these lists in their final form.

All members of the committee shall submit questions for the examinations. The adviser shall write the examination and make a draft available to the committee for approval. Students will have **two weeks** to produce answers to the examination questions.

All members of the examination committee are expected to participate in the reading and grading of the exams and in the administration of the oral exam.

- The typed examination will be administered in take-home format and completed within **two weeks**. All sources used in the composition of answers will be documented according to the standards of scholarly writing in the field. The exams shall be typed in English, with **foreign-language sources cited in the original language**.
- Each section of the PhD examination will consist of three questions of which students choose one and write an essay that is approximately 7-8 pages long (including documentation). The number of examination pages will be approximately **24 double-spaced pages**. Candidates are expected to demonstrate mastery of the appropriate body of theory relevant to each area, including **secondary sources in languages other than English**.
- The typed examinations will be followed by an **oral examination**, to be administered by the candidate's examination committee. The oral examination will be scheduled to follow the typed examinations in as timely a fashion as possible.
- In addition to the three essays, the student must append a **prospectus** of 10 to 12 double-spaced pages plus bibliography. The prospectus must address the following matters:
  - the **research question** and topic that will be at the core of the dissertation
  - a description of the **methodology** that will be implemented in examining the topic
  - a discussion of the **available materials** (books, articles, archives, etc.) and the positions taken on the research topic by previous scholars
  - a provisional itemization of the **chapters in the dissertation** with a focused description of each of the chapters
  - a **timeline** for the writing of the dissertation

**The PhD examination oral defense** will be restricted to the student and the faculty committee; the prospectus oral defense will be open to the public and be scheduled a week after the PhD examination defense.

### **Graduate Examinations and Satisfactory Progress**

- Graduate students entering the program with no advanced preparation beyond the undergraduate degree will be expected to complete 9 credits of graduate course work each semester until satisfaction of departmental and DSAS course requirements for the PhD degree.
- Generally, students should attempt the Comprehensive Examination as soon as they feel they are sufficiently prepared. To remain in good standing, students must take the Comprehensive Examination before the third year of full-time study begins. Students who fail any of the Comprehensive Examination's three sections will be put on probationary status until the failed sections are retaken. To remain in good standing, students entering in the Fall semester must have passed all three sections by 15 April of the third year of full-time study—i.e., after 6 semesters of course work.
- Students who fail any portion of the Qualifying Examination, including the oral examination, will be put on probationary status until the failed portion is retaken.
- In the event of a documented medical or family emergency during the examination period, the examination may be rescheduled.
- Should a student fail any section of the Qualifying or Comprehensive Examination, it may be retaken only once. The timeframe for retaking the examination will be determined by the exam coordinator.

### **Grading**

Examiners assign traditional Pass/Fail marks, which will be translated into a 0 – 4-point scale:

Fail:                      0/1 (examiners may specify level of failure)

Low Pass:	2
Pass:	3
High Pass:	4

Averaged numerical marks are translated back into prose according to the same scale:

0 – 1.75	Fail
1.76 – 2.75	Low Pass
2.76 – 3.75	Pass
3.76 – 4	High Pass

The overall rating of a passing exam (Low Pass, Pass, or High Pass) will be calculated using the same scale, averaging the score of all sections. Failure will not be determined by the total average score, but by the failure of any individual exam section (which may then be retaken once).

## VII. Dissertation

### The Topic

- Students should begin thinking about possible dissertation topics long before taking their PhD comprehensives. The topic should be in an area in which the student is already reasonably well grounded.
- Before requesting faculty members to become dissertation advisers and committee members, students should conduct a preliminary investigation of their topic to verify that their choice is a) feasible and b) not previously investigated.

### The Advisor and Committee

- The selection of the dissertation advisor should be practical; it is to the student's advantage to work with a professor conversant with the given subject. Conversely, the faculty member should not agree to be a dissertation advisor unless s/he/they consider(s) himself/herself/themselves competent to guide dissertation work in the given area and on the given topic, and unless s/he/they consider(s) the dissertator to be sufficiently knowledgeable in the given area to write a competent dissertation. The responsibilities are substantial, and this role should not be undertaken without careful consideration.
- Once a student makes a choice of a topic, s/he/they should type up a brief one-page preliminary description of the project and present it to the proposed adviser.
- If the advisor accepts the role and agrees that the topic is sound, the student, with the help of the advisor, should request a minimum of two other departmental professors and one professor outside the department to form the dissertation committee. The requests should be made formally, in writing, and should include a brief description of the proposed topic. Faculty members will respond to the request in writing.

### The Dissertation Prospectus

- The student should submit to all four (or more) committee members a dissertation prospectus consisting of a) statement of thesis, b) tentative chapter outline, c) bibliography.
- Committee members will provide timely written responses to the prospectus, after which the student should set a date for the prospectus defense.
- At the defense, the student will be asked questions about a) the tenability of the thesis, b) the methodology to be employed in the dissertation, and c) the sources with which the dissertator

plans to work.

- Committee members are to resolve major disagreements regarding topic and methods at the stage of the defense, before advancing the student to full candidacy.

### **Completing the Dissertation**

- Students who pass the overview should immediately embark on further research and begin writing the first draft. All dissertations, including drafts, must be written in competent English. No exceptions will be allowed. Although faculty members will advise on matters of style, substandard English prose will be returned to the student for further work. Students who feel they have persistent problems with writing should consult with the Writing Workshop, Department of English.
- Students should submit drafts to committee members one chapter at a time.
- Faculty members will a) promptly return to the student each chapter with comments, suggestions, and corrections, and b) submit a short summary of their evaluation to the advisor. If committee members are in strong disagreement, the advisor should convene a meeting of the committee members to discuss the conflict, so that, ideally, the student is not put in the position of responding to contradictory advice.
- Once dissertators have revised the draft in line with the committee's recommendations, they should type up the final draft of the dissertation, give a copy to each committee member, and suggest a tentative date for the dissertation defense.
- It is the responsibility of PhD candidates and their faculty advisors to become familiar with the procedures for the defense of the dissertation, which can be found in the DSAS Catalog, which is updated annually.

### **VIII. Academic Integrity**

As a body of scholars in the humanities, department faculty recognize an obligation to define and exemplify high standards of professional conduct, and to uphold these standards in department courses, examinations, and dissertations.

Each student should become familiar with the University Handbook on Academic Integrity. Breaches of academic integrity will be dealt with severely and may be considered grounds for termination from the graduate program. Such breaches include the following:

- Plagiarism (see below)
- Relying in examinations on unauthorized notes or materials
- Copying another's work to submit it as one's own
- Soliciting aid or assistance to cheat
- Assisting in any way, including passive nonintervention, another's attempt to cheat.

It is everyone's responsibility to bring observed violations of academic integrity to the immediate attention of the faculty person in charge, whether openly or in confidence. In serious cases, a graduate-faculty committee will be convened to examine the matter and to recommend as to consequences. Departmental recommendations, as all administrative actions, are subject to University provisions relating to administrative adjudication and appeal.

Plagiarism, like most forms of academic-integrity violations, consists in relying on the work of another without giving due acknowledgment to it. Any of the following acts constitutes plagiarism:

- copying the words of another without giving due credit



- copying the thoughts or ideas of another without giving due credit
- copying or relying on the products of another's research (whether data, methods, bibliography, references, etc.) without giving due credit
- understating the extent of one's indebtedness to the work of another.

One should be aware that laxity of scholarly method often results in the appearance of plagiarism, difficult to distinguish from plagiarism itself. To avoid misunderstanding, it is essential that one be fully conversant with the mechanics of scholarly citation and reference pertinent to a given discipline. A standard guide is the *MLA Handbook*.