

HUMANISTIC STUDIES, PHD

The department offers a PhD in humanistic studies, which includes a program in comparative thought and literature. Priority is given to highly-qualified candidates whose proposed course of study is congruent with faculty interests and strengths.

Financial Aid

Tuition grants, stipends, and teaching fellowships are available to doctoral candidates.

Admission Requirements

To apply, please visit <https://grad.jhu.edu/> (<http://grad.jhu.edu/apply/apply-now/>):

Applications materials include:

- Official Application
- Statement of purpose
- Three letters of recommendation
- Transcripts
- Sample of work
- Supplementary Application Form (Language Form)
- GRE scores and subject (optional)
- TOEFL/IELTS scores (if applicable)

Program Requirements

Each PhD student works with a committee of faculty members who helps to design a coherent, individual program of study. During the first two years, the candidate works closely with each of their advisors. The course of study, seminars, and tutorials lead to three area examinations administered by the department and committee. During the second year, qualified students are invited to teach under faculty supervision, and occasionally students may offer undergraduate seminars of their own design.

PhD students choosing a focus in comparative literature should be competent in three national literatures and have a general familiarity with critical theory. Students are encouraged to spend at least one year studying abroad, usually working in Paris, Florence, Hamburg, Geneva, or Madrid in programs sponsored by the department or the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures.

Students can become supervised teaching assistants in the German Program in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, and they can earn a master's degree in German upon completion of the field examinations, before their doctoral degree is completed. Similar arrangements can generally be made with the Department of Classics and the programs in the Modern Languages and Literatures.

Advisors

New PhD students will work with the department chair to select a faculty member to serve as a primary academic advisor. As a student's interests become defined, they may change advisors or work with a faculty member in another department. Students who choose to work with a faculty member outside of the department should meet regularly with the Department of Comparative Thought and Literature's director of graduate studies.

Third-Year Review

During their third year of residence, after completing all outstanding seminar papers, students will have their work reviewed by a faculty committee. The committee will comprise three faculty members from the department and the faculty members from the other departments with whom the student plans to conduct field exams. The review allows the faculty to assess the student's progress, clarify their status in regards to remaining course work, and define future fields. Prior to the meeting, the student should circulate materials that they judge to be work that will best serve the purpose of the review.

Field Examinations

In their third and fourth years, students are expected to complete three field exams. The exams may serve to help students refine their dissertation topics, or they may be a means of extending and deepening students' knowledge of an area in which they propose to teach and conduct research.

The examinations may take a variety of forms, and the form should be discussed at the student's third-year review. Examples include:

- Work further on a project begun in a seminar and produce a longer paper that would become part of a dissertation
- Read into and across a particular field, writing a series of short papers on the reading or sitting for a written or oral examination on the material studied
- Design and teach an undergraduate course in an area of interest
- Complete the requirements for an MA degree in another department, as a way of strengthening claim to teach in that field

Undergraduate Teaching

Graduate students have many opportunities to develop their skills and confidence as a teacher. Beginning in the second year, students often serve as teaching assistants for courses taught by the department's faculty or, if appropriate, for courses in other departments. In the past, PhD students have taught courses in French and German language programs, English composition and literature, history, philosophy, and political science. More experienced students are encouraged to teach courses of their own invention as a way of completing a field exam, in competition for one of the Dean's Teaching Fellowships, or to add to the department's array of offerings.

Dissertation Review

A second formal review of a student's work will take place after the completion of field exams, either in the student's fourth year or in the fall semester of the fifth year. This review will connect the student with the faculty member with whom they will write a dissertation.

The review will take place when the student has composed a substantial piece of work associated with the dissertation, e.g., the draft of a chapter. This work will be circulated before the review, along with a prospectus of 10-40 pages, to the faculty members the student wishes to have as dissertation advisors. (If all of these advisors are from outside the Department of Comparative Thought and Literature, one of the department's faculty members, selected by the student, will also sit in on the review.)

This discussion is not intended to replace the graduate board oral, which will take place after the dissertation has been completed. However, it will mark the transition from work on the field exams to the preparation and writing of a dissertation.

Departmental Presentations

In their fifth year or beginning of their sixth year, students will give a talk on material from their dissertation to the students and faculty of the department and invited guests. This presentation gives students experience formally presenting their work. It also allows for a wider range of response to that work than a dissertation committee can provide and allows all students in the department to become better acquainted with each other's projects.