DESCRIPTION

The department has two Comprehensive Examinations: (i) Value Theory and (ii) Metaphysics and Epistemology. The two comprehensive examinations are not merely history examinations, although they are grounded in historical texts from Plato to Nietzsche. This means that questions normally include both an expository and a critical component; that is, they require the examinee to demonstrate both an accurate understanding of the views of the philosopher(s) in question and an ability to critically engage those views. All questions are drawn from a list (one for each exam) that is made available beforehand as an aid for those preparing for the exam.

Each examination will be offered twice a year, during the week before the beginning of classes in the Fall and Spring semesters. Each examination will consist of nine questions, three on the Ancient-Medieval period, three on the period from the 17th-19th centuries, and three on the entire period from Plato-Nietzsche. Students must answer one question from each of the three periods, to constitute three answers in total.

Normally, each examination will be six hours in length and will be evaluated by a committee consisting of four members of the graduate faculty of the department. In all decisions, a majority opinion of the committee prevails. If a committee is evenly divided, the examination is a “fail”.

EXPECTATIONS

Full-time graduate students are expected to sit the examination in a timely manner. There are two requirements relevant to timely completion of the exams. The first requirement is that students must have passed at least one exam by no later than the January exam of their second year—that is, by no later than the exam following the third semester in the program. Second, students must have passed both exams by no later than the January exam of their third year, that is, the exam following the fifth semester in the program. Those who fail to satisfy either of these two requirements will be considered not to be making satisfactory progress in the program.

Regulations concerning the Comprehensive Exams are also detailed in the Graduate Studies in Philosophy Regulations. Please familiarize yourself with these Regulations.

READING LISTS

Reading lists for both exams are listed on the following pages. Most of the readings for both lists can be found in one or another of the following anthologies:

2. S. M. Cahn, ed., *Classics of Western Philosophy* (Hackett)
5. A. Hyman and J. Walsh, eds., *Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (Hackett)
7. R. Cummins and D. Owen, eds., *Central Readings in the History of Modern Philosophy: Descartes to Kant* (Wadsworth)
8. Richard Bosely and Martin Tweedale, eds., *Basic Issues in Medieval Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Broadview)

The Leibniz essays in the M&E list can be found in:

9. Ariew & Garber, eds., *G.W. Leibniz: Philosophical Essays* (Hackett) or Ariew & Watkins eds., *Modern Philosophy: An Anthology of Primary Sources* (Hackett)
VALUE THEORY EXAM READING LIST

Plato, Republic
Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics; Politics I, II.1-5, 9, III-IV, VII.1-3, 13
Epicurus, Letter to Menoeceus; Principal Doctrines
Epictetus, Encheiridion
Augustine, City of God, Book XIX
Aquinas, selections from On Kingship I.1-2, 6, II.3; Summa Theologica I-II qq. 90, 91, 94-96 (on law)
Hobbes, Leviathan, Introduction, Book I, Chaps. 1-3, 6, 13-21
Locke, Second Treatise of Government; Letter concerning Toleration
Hume, Treatise of Human Nature, Book II, Part 3, Sec. 3; Book III, Part 1, Secs. 1-2; Book III, Part 2, Secs. 1-2
Rousseau, Discourse on the Origin of Inequality; On the Social Contract
Kant, Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals
Bentham, An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation, Chaps. 1-4, 10 (on utility and pleasure)
Mill, On Liberty; Utilitarianism
Marx, “Alienated Labor” (from Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844); “Ideology in General, German Ideology in Particular” (from The German Ideology); Manifesto of the Communist Party
Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil; On the Genealogy ofMorals, Preface, First and Second Essays
Plato, *Meno; Phaedo; Republic*, Books V-VII; *Parmenides*, 127-135; *Theaetetus; Timaeus*, 27-52
Aristotle, *Categories*, Chaps. 1-5; *Posterior Analytics* I.1-3, II.19; *Physics* I.7, II.1-3, 7-9, IV.10-14; *De Anima*, Books II and III; *Metaphysics* I.1-4, 6, 9, IV.1-2, VI.1, VII.1-6, 13-17, VIII.1-2, XII.6-10
Epicurus, *Letter to Herodotus*
Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* VII.45-54, 132-59 (on Stoics)
Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* I.1-13
Plotinus, *Enneads* I.6, V.1, and VI.9
Porphyry, *Isagoge*
Augustine, *On the Free Choice of the Will*, Book II; *Confessions* VII, VIII.5, 8-10, XI.14-28; *City of God*, VIII.1-12, XII.1-9; *Against the Academics* II. 11-13, III.1-8
Boethius, *Commentary on Isagoge* I.10-11 (on universals); *Consolation of Philosophy* V.2, 3, 6 (on eternity and foreknowledge)
Anselm, *Proslogion*; debate between Gaunilo and Anselm
Abelard, *Glosses on Porphyry* (on universals)
Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I, Questions 2, 12-14, 19
William of Ockham, *Summa Logicae* Part I, Chaps. 14-17
Descartes, *Meditations*
Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics; Monadology*; “Primary Truths” and “A New System of Nature”
Spinoza, *Ethics*, Parts I-II
Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* I.1, II. 1-12, 21, 23, 27, III.2-4, 6, IV.1-4, 6, 9-11
Berkeley, *Principles of Human Knowledge*
Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding; Treatise of Human Nature* I.4.6 (“Of Personal Identity”) and Appendix (on belief)
Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*
Comprehensive examination — A comprehensive examination (or comprehensive exam or exams), often abbreviated as comps, is a specific type of examination[1] that must be completed by graduate students in some disciplines and courses of study. At some institutions it is known as a comprehensive examination testing a student’s proficiency in some special field of Comprehensive Exams. Related Link. Fields of study.

Exam Fields. The four major subfields for examination are: American politics, comparative politics, international relations, and political theory. Students select a major field from among these. Students select a minor field from among the four major fields, or they may select a defined minor in economics, quantitative methods, political economic theory, or law, or they may petition to pursue an individually designed special minor. Exam Eligibility. The comprehensive examination (or its equivalents, such as qualifying examination, core area examination, preliminary examination, candidacy paper, comprehensive evaluation, thesis proposal) is program-specific in terms of the time, format, and evaluation. If applicable, supervisors may also organize dry-runs for students who are preparing for a presentation or oral examination as part of the comps. Supervisors may invite students who have had the comps to provide feedback.