**California State University Northridge**

**MA Comprehensive Exam in English, Rhetoric and Composition Option**

**The Rhetoric and Composition Exam consists of two parts:**

**Part I** Two short essays of approximately 4-7 pages each. Part I asks you to write one essay focused on rhetorical theory and a second essay focused on composition theory. You will choose one of the two prompting questions from each category. While you must use the assigned reading list to develop a foundation for your essay response, you are welcome to supplement your essays with theoretical readings beyond those detailed in the assigned reading list. Such additions are not, however, required.

**Part II** One 7-10-page essay written during the two weeks following the submission of the Part I essays. Part II is based on a specific area of specialization, which you develop in conjunction with your Exam Adviser.

**Timeline for Students Taking the Exam**

Students taking the MA Exam will be given specific dates for deadlines described below relevant to the semester in which they are taking the exam. The Graduate Adviser will communicate these dates by email and through the ENGL 697C Canvas page.

**Week 1 of the semester in which you plan to take the exam:**

* Register for the exam by 1) confirming through email with the Graduate Adviser that you plan to take the exam, and 2) by signing up for the course attached to the exam, ENGL 697C. This course is not a class students attend but rather a way of assigning three credits to students taking the MA Exam.
* Ask a full-time English Department faculty member who is a specialist in Rhetoric & Composition to be your Exam Adviser and discuss the area of interest you wish to address in the second part of your exam.

**Week 2**

* Give your Exam Adviser a preliminary reading list of texts (books and/or articles) in your specialization area (Part II of the Exam). Your adviser will work with you to determine an appropriate number and variety of texts.

**Week 4**

* Submit your reading list for Part II of the exam (revised in consultation with your Exam Adviser) to the ENGL 697C Canvas page.

**Week 9**

* You will receive the questions for Part I of the MA Exam from the Graduate Adviser, and these questions will also be posted on the ENGL 697C Canvas page.

**Week 11**

* Submit Part I of the Exam to the ENGL 697C Canvas page by the date indicated on Canvas and through Graduate Adviser’s email.
* Once you submit Part I of the MA Exam, you will receive the question for Part II of the exam from the Graduate Adviser. This question for Part II will also be posted on the ENGL 697C Canvas page once Part I has been submitted.

**Week 14**

* Submit Part II of the MA Exam to the ENGL 697C Canvas page by the date indicated on Canvas and through Graduate Adviser’s email.

**OVERVIEW**

The exam consists of two parts. In order to pass the exam, you must receive a score of 2 (low pass) or higher on each part of the exam from each faculty member assigned to evaluate your exam. If there are a difference in scores received from members of the exam committee, a majority vote will determine your final score. If you fail one part of the exam, you must retake that one part. If you fail both parts of the exam, you must retake both parts.

**Part I: General Knowledge of the Disciplines of Rhetoric and Composition**

Part I of the exam is a general examination of your knowledge of the fields of Rhetoric and Composition, of your ability to think critically about and articulate this knowledge, and of your ability to apply concepts and theories you have studied. This part of the exam is based on a common reading list, and you are expected to be familiar with the readings and to refer to the readings in your responses to the exam questions.

The exam questions are concerned with both Rhetoric and Composition, and you must answer a question in each category (one Rhetoric and one Composition question). Within each category, there will be various types of questions from which you can choose the one question you will answer in your essay. Some may be historical, some analytical, some applied, etc.

Once you submit your responses to the ENGL 697C Canvas page, you will be given your question for the essay on your area of specialization (see Part II below).

**Part II: Specialty within Rhetoric and Composition**

Part II of the exam gives you the opportunity to write about your specialized area of interest in fields of Rhetoric and Composition Studies. Some possibilities for your specialized area are listed below; however, you are free to develop your own specialty in consultation with your Exam Adviser.

Examples of Specialties:

* Argument
* Classical rhetoric
* Composition studies and teaching in secondary schools
* Connections between composition theory and literary theory
* Connections between creative writing theory and Rhet/Comp theory
* Developmental writing studies
* Disabilities and composition
* Feminism and composition
* Multiple Englishes
* Narrative in the First Year Writing Class
* Genre
* Issues in grammar
* Linguistics and composition
* Modern rhetoric
* Political issues and Rhet/Comp
* Queer rhetoric
* Reading/Writing connections
* Rhetoric and race
* Threshold Concepts
* Transfer
* Working with ESL students
* Writing across the curriculum
* Writing Centers

At the beginning of the semester in which you plan to take your exam, you will choose your specialization area in consultation with your Exam Adviser, who will help you develop a reading list. The question for Part II of the exam will be created based on that list. You will receive the question for Part II once you submit your answers to Part I of the exam. After you receive the question for Part II, you will have approximately two weeks to complete a polished 7-10-page typed response to the question. Your response should engage with the texts on your specialization area reading list.

**EVALUATING THE RHETORIC AND COMPOSITION EXAM**

Reflects Common Scale for Shared Rubric but does not include lowest category (not demonstrated)

**4=High Pass EXCELLENT**

Exam questions assigned this score show very strong ability on the part of the examinee to provide a detailed, substantive, and insightful discussion about the area under focus. Exams in this category may be marked by all or some of the following features:

• impressively substantive in material selected for discussion

• noteworthy integration/synthesis of material, ideas, and/or concepts from more than one perspective in rhetoric/composition (as befits the question)

• thorough use of specific, relevant and well-chosen examples

• well-structured and convincing argumentation

• good balance between specific and general discussion

**3=Pass MORE THAN SATISFACTORY**

Exam questions assigned this score show good ability on the part of the examinee to provide a detailed, substantive, and insightful discussion about the area under focus. Exams in this category may be marked by all or some of the following features:

• consistently substantive in material selected for discussion

• some integration/synthesis of material, ideas, and/or concepts from one or more areas in rhetoric/composition (as befits the question)

• good use of specific, relevant and well-chosen examples

• generally well-structured and convincing argumentation

• adequate balance between specific and general discussion

**2=Low Pass SATISFACTORY**

Exam questions assigned this score show adequate but undistinguished ability on the part of the examinee to provide a detailed, substantive, and insightful discussion about the area under focus. Exams in this category may be marked by all or some of the following features:

• inconsistently substantive in material selected for discussion

• thin integration/synthesis of material, ideas, and/or concepts related to the question and little or no attempt to draw on more than one area in the field

• uneven use of specific, relevant and well-chosen examples and/or absence of sufficient detail

• some convincing argumentation

• some balance between specific and general discussion

• occasional misrepresentation of relevant concepts

**1=Unacceptable/Fail LESS THAN SATISFACTORY**

Exam questions assigned this score show little or no ability on the part of the examinee to provide a detailed, substantive, and insightful discussion about the area under focus in the exam question. Exams assigned this score might also show absent or inaccurate understanding of basic thinkers or basic concepts in the field. Exams in this category may be marked by all or some of the following features:

• absence of enough material to sustain a substantive discussion

• superficial response to the question that does not integrate/synthesize material in standard academic format

• failure to provide details or specifics for claims made

• frequent or egregious misrepresentation of ideas or concepts accepted in the field

• weak writing skills that lead to difficulty in a reader processing the exam as a whole