

A SHORT INTRODUCTION TO THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS

For the M.A. in Theatre Arts

Department of Performing Art & Music at Regent University

The written comprehensive examination in theatre tests the student's knowledge of a broad range of graduate-level topics germane to the discipline. Moreover, the exam presents the student with an opportunity to demonstrate a number of graduate-level skills expected of someone completing an M.A. program. These skills include the ability to think critically, the ability to integrate faith and reason, and the ability to express such thought in a compelling written form.

The exam in theatre is a weeklong event. The questions will be provided to the student on the first day of the exam period. It should also be stated that this exam will not take an entire week to complete; this generous timetable was adopted to allow students to negotiate their concurrently-enrolled coursework, as well as work and family obligations. Students would be wise to clear their schedules as much as possible during this week to accommodate the demands of the exam.

The exam can only be scheduled in the last semester of a student's course of study since it is a part of the culminating experience. A student expecting to take the exam in any given semester should enroll in the one-credit exam class (THE 597). The exact dates for the exam will be announced in Blackboard; the exam week usually falls just after mid-semester.

The exam in theatre is a written exam. The questions asked are open-ended prompts designed to spur the student to intellectual action. The student's response to the prompt will take the form of a critical essay with supporting citations. As such, the student should employ the writing skills appropriate to a traditional term paper aligned with the MLA Style Manual.

Most students will be provided four questions or prompts. The proper response for each of these four questions will be a document that is four to five pages in length. Since there are four questions, the total length of the exam will be sixteen to twenty pages of written text. A student could also be provided two questions or prompts which require a more prolonged response.

The study of theatre at the graduate level demands more intellectual prowess than expressed at the undergraduate level. A graduate student should be able to set her opinions in the greater flow of intellectual traditions, to include the historical, philosophical, and/or theoretical. Specifically, the program expects the student to call upon the texts of her coursework (both required and supplemental) to answer the exam questions. Support materials beyond the course texts are welcome when used appropriately. The student is not obliged to use any specific text but should choose texts that support her argument. Students are thus advised to keep all their course materials (textbooks, PDFs, and syllabi) until after they have graduated.

Should a student receive a No Pass designation on the exam, she will be permitted to register and re-take the exam in a future semester. The exam may be retaken only once. Receiving a "No Pass" on two attempts at the comprehensive exam will bring the student's attempt to complete the program to an unsuccessful end.

(updated: 13 October 2017)