PhD PROGRAM STRUCTURE AND REQUIREMENTS

Coursework

*Years one to three*

Students take a total of fifteen courses during their first three years at Brown: three courses per semester in the first and second years (plus an additional language-instruction methodology course in the Spring of the first year), and two over the course of the third year, one of which may be an independent study devoted to work on the Major Paper. Students entering the program with a Master of Arts may be exempted from up to two courses after consultation with the DGS and departmental approval.

Departmental course offerings are plentiful, from panoramic courses covering broad areas (e.g. early modern Spain, Colonial Latin America, modern Latin American poetry or narrative) to more focused seminars on writers, movements, or topics, often transatlantic in scope. While being trained as scholars in Hispanic Studies, students are encouraged to take up to two of their fifteen required courses in related disciplines, such as French and Francophone Studies (with whom we share the beautiful Rochambeau House), Anthropology, Comparative Literature, English, History, History of Art and Architecture, Literary Arts, Modern Culture and Media, and Portuguese and Brazilian Studies. In special circumstances, students may take a third course outside the department with approval. Students who want to pursue more in-depth study in a secondary discipline may consider Brown’s Open Graduate Education Program (see below). Students should consult with the DGS for guidance in their choices before signing up for classes.

Language Requirements

Aside from fluency in Spanish and English, students must show proficiency in two additional languages during their time at Brown: the first by the end of the second year in the program, the second by the end of the fourth year. These requirements can be fulfilled by (a) passing a translation exam; (b) taking two language classes or one advanced seminar (undergraduate or graduate level) for credit; (c) counting comparable work done at a previous institution; or (d) taking an intensive summer course in the language.

Preliminary Exams

Students take preliminary exams after their second summer in the program, in early September of the third year. The exams cover a reading list of 70 books, evenly divided between peninsular and Latin American literatures, spanning medieval to contemporary texts. The purpose of the reading list and exams is to give students broad knowledge of and an ability to teach a panorama of texts comprising different traditions and time periods in Spanish-speaking cultures. There are two exams, divided by geographical area and given on two days. Each exam lasts four hours and requires students to answer three questions. At least one question in the exam should be answered in Spanish if the student’s mother tongue is English. Preliminary exams are discussed and approved by faculty of professorial rank. The DGS will normally communicate the results of the exam to the candidate within a week. If all the questions are deemed satisfactory by the majority of the faculty, the student has passed the exam and can proceed to the other requirements for the PhD.

If one or two questions of the written examination are deemed less than satisfactory an oral examination on questions or areas found lacking will be scheduled within approximately a
week after the faculty has read the examination. The DGS will provide the student with a copy of the problematic answer(s) and ask that he or she seek feedback from the individual(s) who wrote the question(s). Faculty members will provide concrete feedback regarding the problems with the answer. The oral exam will be moderated by the DGS or the Chair and include faculty who specialize in the area(s) involved. The student will be given 10-15 minutes to elaborate on and rectify the problem answers in an oral presentation based on notes. Faculty may then ask further questions on the question itself or on larger issues related to it. If the student’s response is still deemed unsatisfactory, the exam may have to be repeated or some compensatory measures be taken. Such measures will be tailored to the individual case.

If the bulk of the exam is deemed unsatisfactory by the majority of faculty, the student may either be asked to repeat the whole exam at the next available date, or to withdraw from the program.

**Major Paper**

After passing the preliminary exam, students begin work on a Major Paper. This is a 25-30 page study of materials related to the planned dissertation topic. The Major Paper can be thought of as the first draft of a chapter or an article related to the dissertation, or as a methodological exploration of topics to be examined in the dissertation. The paper should reflect knowledge of the field of study and research of appropriate bibliography. It should dialogue with a community of scholars that previously have worked on the same or related topics or works in order to advance an original and nuanced argument.

Students sign up for an independent study with a faculty member of their choosing to work on this paper during the Fall semester of the third year, and it should be completed by the end of that semester. The paper should follow recent MLA style unless there is reason to follow another standard format such as Chicago. It is not handed into the Graduate School and therefore needs not follow the formatting and guidelines for PhD dissertations. One copy of the Major Paper should be given to the student’s advisor; another should be given to the department. Failure to complete the Major Paper to the advisor’s satisfaction jeopardizes good standing in the program.

**Oral Exams**

Students devote the Spring of the third year to oral exams and the dissertation proposal. Students should at this point identify at least a dissertation advisor and a second reader, and may also choose at this point to include a third committee member (see Dissertation below). This third committee member will be referred to as the third reader.

Working closely with these committee members, students put together a major reading list composed of 20 primary sources in their main field of study. This list should include works that will be studied in the dissertation but should also encompass a more comprehensive range of sources. The idea here is to assure that students can claim an area of broad expertise when they go on the job market. The major list can also be thought of as the basis for advanced undergraduate or graduate courses.

The minor list should consist of ten books. There are two main options for this list. It may be comprised of major book-length secondary studies of a theoretical, literary critical, or historiographical nature that provide a broader scholarly context for approaching the works in
their main field. The other option would be a minor list composed of primary sources in an area of specialization complementary to the main field. One week before the oral examination students should submit these lists to the departmental administrator for distribution among faculty.

It is understood that students will be responsible for key articles and books chapters related to specific titles on their lists, and that specific critical sources may not count for the minor list.

**Dissertation Proposal and Presentation**

Three weeks after the oral exam students will submit their dissertation proposal, with approval from the advisor, to the Department Manager for distribution to faculty. A proposal presentation before the faculty will be scheduled for approximately one week after submission.

The proposal generally consists of approximately 8 double spaced pages of narrative explanation plus a bibliography of primary works (one page) and key secondary sources (maximum two pages) for a total of 10 to 11 pages. The proposal offers an overview of the topic to be investigated, the corpus of works to be studied and the rationale for choosing that corpus, and the critical and methodological framework to be utilized. It should also situate the project within a broader scholarly conversation, commenting on the work already done on the subject and questions still to be addressed. The DGS can provide the student with models for the proposal.

The proposal presentation is not an examination to be passed or failed. Rather, it is a forum for the student to receive useful feedback on his/her project at an early stage in its development. The forum begins with a 10-15 minute presentation by the student, in English or in Spanish, that complements, rather than reiterates, the proposal. The presentation generally includes an account of how the student became drawn to the topic, why it is significant and their plan of action for the dissertation. The presentation is then followed by comments and suggestions from the faculty.

**Advancement to Candidacy**

*Years four to five (or six)*

Once oral exams have been passed and the dissertation proposal accepted students advance to candidacy. Research at that time becomes more independent and involves fewer members of the department. However, faculty remain involved with the students in professional development.

The department encourages students to apply in their fourth year for fellowships offered by different entities at Brown such as the Cogut Center, the John Carter Brown Library, and the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies (see Funding Options below).

Students do not teach in the fifth year in order to be able to dedicate themselves to dissertation writing and job applications. Students who remain in good standing midway through the fifth year, but who need additional time to finish writing their dissertation, will be eligible to apply for dissertation completion support through the Graduate School (see Funding Options).
Academic Standing
Academic standing is determined by performance in courses, timely completion of requirements, and performance of roles such as teaching assistantships. Consideration is also given to participation in departmental colloquia and other sites of intellectual activity. While grades are not the only factor, two or more incompletes jeopardize good standing in the program; two or more B grades are considered unsatisfactory and will typically result in a standing of warning; a grade of C does not count for credit toward the degree. For information on standing, also consult the Graduate School Handbook.

Typical Timeline of Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Spring</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>3 seminars; no teaching</td>
<td>3 seminars plus methodology course; no teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>3 seminars; teach 1 course</td>
<td>3 seminars; teach 1 course; fulfill 1st language requirement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>2 seminars; Major Paper; teach 1 course</td>
<td>Oral exams and dissertation proposal; teach 1 course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>Dissertation writing; teach 1 course</td>
<td>Dissertation writing; teach 1 course; apply for internal fellowships; fulfill 2nd language requirement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>Dissertation writing; no teaching; job applications</td>
<td>Dissertation writing; no teaching; complete dissertation, or apply for Dissertation Completion Fellowship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>Dissertation writing; no teaching; job applications</td>
<td>Dissertation defense; teaching; job applications</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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1 Only for students in good standing who receive the DCP fellowship (See Funding Options).