

Department of Art History

Foreign Language Examination

Graduate students are required to demonstrate ability to read art-historical texts in one or more foreign languages, and their proficiency is tested through a test administered by the Department at the beginning of each term, and at other times if requested and the request can be accommodated.

The student will be given a passage from a book or article dealing with art historical material, in nearly all cases a modern scholarly publication that should be understandable to students from any sub-field. In the one-hour period allocated for the examination, the student should translate the passage, beginning at the point indicated. An end point suggesting that minimum amount to be translated will also be indicated; students may and should do more than the minimum amount if they can. The emphasis should be on accuracy rather than elegance; it is a test of comprehension, reading ability, rather than translating ability. Quality is more important than quantity, and students should not rush, but render the meaning of the passage as accurately as possible. When possible to do so, past tense verbs should be translated as past tense, plural nouns translated as plural nouns, feminine as feminine and so forth, even if the result is not the most elegant English translation. Students may use a printed dictionary, which they must bring with them to the examination, as none will be provided. No online resources can be used. Students may write their translations with pen, or use a computer that will be provided by the Department office; if they prefer a computer, they must notify the office in advance, when they sign up for taking the examination, so that one will be available.

Each examination is read and graded “blind” by two members of the faculty, the name of the student not being attached to the examination, and is marked either Pass or Fail by each, and reported independently to the Department office. In the event of disparate opinions, a third reader serves as tie-breaker. The names of the readers will be given to the student in the letter reporting the results of the examination, whether passed or failed. If after the examination a student has questions, whether they passed or failed, they should feel free to ask for a copy of the examination, and to discuss it with either or both readers and/or with the Director of Graduate Studies.

Approved by Faculty 11/14/2018