

The following pieces of information can be found at the department's web page. They are all collected here in one file for the sake of convenience.

1. General Guidelines

The student chooses one literary topic (area) of all possible ones which she/he have encountered during Master studies. The student will present the topic (area) orally, trying to express her/his individual perspective to the topic, with the support of three to five secondary academic sources.

In required time at least four weeks before the state exam, students are asked to submit a preparation sheet. It includes: the topic of the presentation, an abstract of the preparation, and annotated bibliography of secondary sources. The preparation sheet will be submitted in person or by e-mail to [Jana Popelkova](#). It needs to include your name.

2. Specific Details

Philosophy

Masters' students are asked to be independent in their work with sources, data and information. They will demonstrate their analytical and connective thinking.

Form

The state exams focus on analysis of and connections between literary fields, personae, theories, traditions, etc. and it can also include the field of cultural studies. The goal of the exam is in-depth focus on the topic of one's own choice. This choice can be made from a wide range of authors, topics, areas, literary movements, literary and cultural theories and perspectives encountered during the whole course of Master's study (this includes any literary and cultural compulsory courses, compulsorily optional and optional courses that you have taken). At the same time, the choice is not strictly limited to course content but may well reach beyond it if such a choice is well justified (for example, one may choose to speak about Elizabeth Bowen, who was not introduced in the course on British modernism but who undoubtedly belongs to that period and is included as a British modernist writer by reliable literary sources – *Norton Anthology*, *Cambridge Companion to Modernism* and others).

The goal of the exam is to show that students are able to work independently with the knowledge acquired so far, that they can deepen and question it as well as make effective connections. Students are expected to investigate topics encountered in their Master's study so far to further depth and extent. For this kind of independent investigation, it is necessary that students use both course materials and other sources accessible in libraries and databases (Literature Online, JSTOR, Google Scholar) to prepare for the exam.

Students will prepare to talk of a specific TOPIC of their own choice. The topic should concern:

- the student's own critical perspective developed in relation to primary and secondary sources. Students will specify their own topic and approach it analytically. (For example, how the progress of civilization is treated differently in T.S. Eliot and E. M. Forster; or, how race is represented in contemporary urban novels; or what role Christianity plays in the novels of Louise Erdrich; or the significance of violence for the formation of identity in young adult fiction, etc.)
- primary source(s): one or more novel(s), play(s), collection(s) of short stories or poems, etc. by one or more authors.
- secondary sources: 3-5 (books of criticism, articles from literary journals, literary companions such as Cambridge, literary encyclopedias, scholarly articles found at Google scholar or Literature Online); but NO sparknotes or wikipedia.

Preparation for the exam:

Students will be asked to submit a preparation sheet (type-written, font 12, printed out). Submission Deadline: about one month before the exam; same as for the state exams in linguistics

The preparation sheet will include:

- topic (stated briefly)
- abstract (stating the analysis of the topic, their individual perspective, questions, ideas, findings, points of interest, etc.)
- annotated bibliography of secondary sources. Each annotation will be about 1 paragraph long (5-10 sentences roughly). It will include:
 - A. main ideas from the source
 - B. justification of the choice of source - why the source is relevant for the individual topic or perspective and how it helps shed light on it.

The exam will take 10-15 minutes and will have 2 parts:

5-10 min: oral delivery of topic - no powerpoint presentation; students will speak on their own topic; a preparation sheet and some supporting notes for the talk are recommended; mere reading is discouraged and will result in a significantly lower grade; it is necessary to keep the time limit in mind.

5 min: conversation on the topic in the form of questions and answers

Assessment:

The exam will be assessed according to an assessment rubric. The evaluation will include:

1. **the actual performance** when presenting the topic
2. **the quality of answers** during Q&A (less stress on data, more stress on connective thinking and independent development of ideas during conversation)
3. **the preparation sheet** (annotated bibl. + abstract)

Note: If a student’s Master’s thesis is in the field of literature, some crossovers are possible. The main topic for the oral part of the state exams may be similar but cannot be exactly the same as in the thesis. The choice of the theme for the oral part of the state exam should be consulted with the supervisor of the thesis.

3. Assessment Rubric

| | PRESENTATION | RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS | PREPARATION SHEET |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A Exceptional | Student’s critical perspective is clear and ideas are original; they are well-supported by evidence from both the primary and secondary sources; source information is scholarly, it is analyzed and synthesized effectively and persuasively. | Responses are thoughtful; their quality is consistently solid; students convincingly defend their position on the topic | The topic introduced in the abstract is focused; student’s perspective on the topic is original. Sources listed in the annotated bibliography are scholarly, their connection to student’s presentation is justified |
| B Above average | Student’s critical perspective is clear; it is supported by evidence from both the primary and secondary sources; source information is mostly scholarly, it is analyzed and synthesized well | Responses are thoughtful, but their quality may appear slightly uneven; students convincingly defend their position on the topic | The topic introduced in the abstract is focused; student’s perspective on the topic is persuasive. Sources listed in the annotated bibliography are scholarly, their connection to student’s presentation is in most cases justified |

| | | | |
|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>C Average</p> | <p>Student's critical perspective is rather commonplace; it is partly supported by evidence from both the primary and secondary sources; source information is mostly scholarly, it is analyzed and synthesized well</p> | <p>Responses are thoughtful, but their quality is uneven; when defending their position on the topic, students may occasionally use vague generalities or clichés</p> | <p>The topic introduced in the abstract is quite broad; student's perspective on the topic is commonplace. Sources listed in the annotated bibliography are both scholarly and popular, their connection to student's presentation is justified but only in some cases</p> |
| <p>D Below average</p> | <p>Student's critical perspective is inconsistent; evidence from both the primary and secondary sources is limited; source information is mostly popular and too general, it is not analyzed and synthesized appropriately</p> | <p>Responses are too vague; when defending their position on the topic, students rely only on generalities or clichés</p> | <p>The topic introduced in the abstract is too broad; student's perspective on the topic is rudimentary. Sources listed in the annotated bibliography are mostly popular, their connection the to student's presentation is only vaguely explained</p> |
| <p>E Poor</p> | <p>Student's critical perspective is superficial; evidence from both the primary and secondary sources is limited; source information is mostly unreliable and too general, it is not analyzed and synthesized appropriately</p> | <p>Responses are rudimentary; students cannot defend their position on the topic convincingly</p> | <p>The topic introduced in the abstract is broad and superficial; student's perspective on the topic is rudimentary. Sources listed in the annotated bibliography are unreliable, their connection to student's presentation is not clearly stated</p> |
| <p>F Not Passing</p> | <p>Presentation lacks critical perspective, it is descriptive, and lacks relevant ideas. Source information is not analyzed or synthesized.</p> | <p>Responses are not satisfactory; students fail to defend their position on the topic</p> | <p>The abstract summarizes the content of the primary source and does not contain any topic. The sources listed in the annotated bibliography are missing or not reliable, their connection to student's presentation is not explained</p> |