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January 1, 2005

Social-Personality Area (SP) Comprehensive Exams

Students can choose to take their examinations in any three of the traditional areas of social psychology (e.g., attraction, altruism, aggression, attitudes and behavior, communication, conflict and peacemaking, conformity, emotions, cultural and social influence, group processes, persuasion, prejudice, scientific methodology, and so forth) and/or in any of the social psychological topics of special interest to our SP faculty and students. (For example, Elaine Hatfield's students may well be those who are especially interested in love, sexual desire, or emotion; Chuck Mueller's in one or more applied areas; Sam Shapiro's in ancient Asian psychologies of mind, psychology of wisdom and knowledge, higher education, or transpersonal psychology.)

Students and their advisors will select the three topics to be covered.

Guidelines for the Written Doctoral Comprehensive Examination

1. The committee Chair and the graduate student will select three or four members of the department and one or two outside persons (for a total of five) to serve on the Comprehensive Examination Committee. (Students should submit the names of committee members on Form III, Doctoral Committee, to the Graduate Division). This committee is responsible for constructing and grading the examination.

The people eligible to serve are listed here:

<http://www.hawaii.edu/graduate/wa/selectmember.php>

2. The Committee will write seven questions designed to test the candidate's knowledge of social-personality psychology as described in the introduction above. The questions should be designed to test the student's knowledge of the material typically covered in traditional Social Psychology texts, handbooks, and journals and in the students' special interests within the SP program.

3. The chair and the candidate will select a time for the examination and arrange for the specific place, hours, and proctoring of the examination. The examination will generally be scheduled for a time during the regular fall or spring semester.

4. The candidate will not see the questions until the time of the exam. They may write for two hours on Day 1 (selecting 2 out of 3 questions) and for three hours on Day 2 (selecting 3 out of 4 questions). The exam may be handwritten, typed, or typed on a computer.

5. The examination shall be written by the candidate without books, notes, or reference materials, and without collaboration of any kind.

6. Generally, committee members will grade the entire examination. On occasion, if a candidate has selected an extremely specialized area, all committee members may not feel qualified to evaluate every question. However, it is expected that topics will be sufficiently broad so that at least two committee members are able to grade each question. Members may, of course, consult with experts in the area under consideration to make sure their knowledge is up-to-date in these specialized areas.

7. The examination shall be graded on the following scale (using fractional scale values as appropriate):

- 5: Outstanding: Unusual in a graduate student.
- 4: Very good: Better than average.
- 3. Average performance: Passing although deficient in minor details.
- 2. Inadequate: Clearly below average performance.
- 1. Very inadequate: Clearly inferior performance.

8. If the student's examination grade is 4.0 or higher (on the average), the candidate passes with distinction; if 3.0 or higher, the examination is passed; if 2.99 or below, the examination is failed.

9. Unless unavoidable delays occur, the graders shall report results to the committee chair within one week of the receipt of the answers to the questions. The committee chair shall inform the candidate and committee members of the results of the examination within two weeks of its completion.

10. Students are allowed to take a comprehensive examination two times. If students still have not passed it, they may petition the SP faculty and ask to be allowed to try again, explaining their special circumstances.

As with all our other rules, the SP area can make exceptions when it is warranted. (For example, the students could petition to write a *Psychological Review* article if they had some sort of handicap and were unable to take conventional exams.) Students in the SP program have the option of choosing this comprehensive exam system or any other examination procedure approved by the SP program and the Graduate Affairs Committee.

The graduate division has a useful web resource listing all those faculty who may serve on committees, department by department.

See

<http://www.hawaii.edu/graduate/wa/selectmember.php>