

# LSU ART HISTORY

## MA DEGREE THESIS PROGRAM INTRODUCTION

### COURSE WORK

Students are required to take eight courses (24 credits) of regular courses plus two semesters of ARTH 8000 (6 thesis hour credits) for a total of 30 credit hours.

All must be graduate level courses (4000-level and above).

4 courses (9 credits) must be at the 7000 level. The most common and frequently offered are the graduate research seminars (7441 and 7442) and, occasionally offered, ARTH 7400 (Art Theory and Criticism). If it can be arranged with an appropriate professor, students may take one semester of ARTH 7490 (Independent Study in Art History), but no more than one, and do not necessarily need to take any.

### Distribution Requirements

Of the 24 credits of regular course work (8 courses), students are required to take at least one course in 3 of the 4 following areas: (1) ancient and medieval art; (2) Renaissance through 18th-century art; (3) 19<sup>th</sup> through 21<sup>st</sup>-century art; and (4) non-western art. Questions regarding whether or not a course fulfills a given distribution area should be brought to the Art History Area Coordinator or the Art History Graduate Advisor.

### Masters Colloquium

In addition to all other course work, beginning in the Spring of 2010, all students will be required to take a one-credit course, ART 7410, Colloquium in Art Historical Methods, that will meet regularly for one hour once a week throughout the semester. It will be taught by all the members of the department. This course will generally be held in the fall semester.

### FOREIGN LANGUAGE EXAM

Students must complete a reading competency exam in French or German. In special cases where a student's thesis topic requires expertise in a language other than French or German, that language may be substituted as long as there are two appropriate readers for the exam. The exam is normally scheduled to be taken with the student's major professor (see below).

It is advisable that the exam be taken in the second semester of their studies. It should be taken no later than their third semester. Language exams are read by the student's major professor and one other professor in the department. They are pass/fail.

### CHOOSING A MAJOR FIELD OF STUDY

Major fields or areas of study cannot be defined absolutely but might, for example, include Asian, Ancient Greek and/or Roman art, Medieval art, Nineteenth-Century art, etc. Major fields can also be defined more narrowly, e.g., Chinese art, Renaissance painting, or New Media art.

Students should choose a major field of study in their second semester. It is possible though not advisable to do this at the very start of their third semester if timely graduation is to be achieved. Students should consult as early as possible with the professor associated with their desired field of study. That professor will be their major professor and principal advisor for the rest of their degree progress.

Students should plan to take a minimum of three courses in their major field of study.

## COMPREHENSIVE EXAM

Students are required to take a comprehensive exam in their major field or area of study at the end of their third or fourth semester of the program. Timing of this exam, which should be done in consultation with their major professor, should be considered carefully. If scheduled too early the student may not have sufficient expertise in their field to pass the exam; if taken too late it may interfere with the progress of the written thesis. Ideally, students will have chosen a thesis topic prior to taking the comprehensive exam.

The nature and scope of the comprehensive exam are determined by the major professor, but one factor may be the thesis topic, which may suggest that the student have expertise in that particular area. Exams are prepared and administered by the student's major professor and read by the major professor and one other member of the art history faculty. They are pass/fail. Occasionally a student will pass one section of the exam but fail another. In that case students need only retake the portion of the exam they failed.

## ESTABLISHING A THESIS COMMITTEE

Upon declaring a major field or area, the student must establish a thesis committee in consultation with her/his major professor. The committee will consist of three members: the major professor who chairs the committee, and two other LSU faculty. It is often appropriate that one member of the committee be a faculty member from a discipline relevant to the student's thesis but outside of the Art History Area.

## THESIS

### Selecting a Topic

Students must determine their thesis topic in consultation with her/his major professor. This must be accompanied or soon followed by the preparation of a written *prospectus*— a preliminary description of the topic and plan of work, plus a brief bibliography.

These tasks should be accomplished as early as it is feasible to do so. Students who select their topic at the end of their first year of study will have the following summer to write their prospectus, and most of the following academic year to write the thesis. Students who arrive at their topic later, say, at the outset of the second year, have less time for writing.

Students normally require the better part of two semesters to write their thesis (during which they will take 8000-level, thesis credit courses). However, students should note that the final thesis is due by the Graduate School normally several weeks *before* the end of the semester (this varies only

slightly from year to year). Students also need to leave time to allow all their committee members to read and comment on the final draft.

### Nature of the Thesis

Careful planning should avoid the thesis seeming like an overwhelming task.

Theses vary considerably in length and in the nature of their analyses. Some have suggested that the paper should be the rough equivalent (in size) of two standard research papers of the type written in graduate seminars. Most theses in LSU Art History have averaged between 40 and 60 pages.

Students must demonstrate the ability to deal thoroughly with a topic, to think critically about the issues it involves, to read and critically evaluate the existing literature relevant to the topic, and to write articulately about it.

The thesis should be distinguished from a report. Where a report organizes and amasses information and sources on a topic, the thesis is organized around a principal idea about the material that is argued and backed up. The thesis should strive to make a new point, and not one that has already been made in the literature about the subject. Often it is suggested that students begin with a question about the topic, and seek to answer that question in the course of thesis research. Such research may lead to discoveries that require an adjustment of the question, but the final paper should take the form of a well-argued answer to that question.

Students should make use of their major professors and schedule discussions about their topics that will help them approach their topic from multiple viewpoints and ultimately arrive at a thesis statement or research question.

### The Electronic Thesis

Theses are submitted to the LSU Graduate School in electronic form. A how-to guide for doing this, plus a link to existing LSU theses existing in the library, are available by logging on to the Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Home Page at <http://etd.lsu.edu/>.

### ORAL DEFENSE

Upon completion of the last draft of the thesis, students distribute copies of it to their committee members for reading and comments. Committee members should in most cases receive hard copies so they can make notes. Committee members should have one to two weeks, and at least one weekend, to do this. Students also schedule with their committee members and the Graduate School a meeting time for their oral defense and arrange a room for the defense (rooms are reserved in the Dean's Office).

At the meeting (the Oral Defense), students make a very brief presentation about their thesis and answer questions posed by the committee members. The nature of these questions is not set, but students should be prepared to defend their choice of topic and plan of attack. After the meeting, students can expect to complete anything from minor typographical and grammatical corrections, to (in fewer cases) rewriting of some sections of the paper.

TIMELINE FOR THE MA THESIS PROGRAM (A guideline: individual cases may vary.)

Summer <i>before</i> beginning grad study	Students consider enrolling in a language reading course like FREN 1020 or GERM 4005 (or their equivalent elsewhere)
First semester	Enroll in three courses, including one at the 7000 level. Consider enrolling in language course if you have not already done so. Enroll in ARTH 7410 – 1-credit course (only offered in Fall semester) in addition to 3 3-credit courses.
Second semester	Enroll in three courses, including one at the 7000 level. Schedule language exam. Select a major professor. Determine a thesis topic.
Summer following second semester	Prepare thesis prospectus. Complete language studies if not already done. Consider joining a study abroad program (not mandatory).
Third semester	Enroll in three courses, including one at the 7000 level and one 8000-level thesis research. Begin writing thesis—complete as much as possible. Schedule and take Comprehensive Exam at end of semester. Read over Graduate School Guidelines and discuss your deadlines with your major professor. Make sure ARTH 7410 requirement is fulfilled.
Fourth semester	Enroll in one or two courses plus one 8000-level thesis research. Determine a committee and schedule meeting for Oral defense. Distribute final draft thesis to committee members. Make final corrections, if needed, and schedule review by Graduate School editor. Submit thesis and accompanying paperwork.

DEGREE-ONLY REGISTRATION

If one or more deadlines are not met for graduation in their fourth semester, students may receive their degrees at the end of the following (usually summer) semester by registering for “degree only” and paying a small graduation fee. In this case, the thesis must be submitted to and approved by the Graduate School before the last day to add courses in the semester of graduation, but all other degree requirements, including the oral defense, must be completed in the previous semester.