

GUIDELINES FOR THE CRP PROCESS: PROPOSAL, PROJECT, ORAL DEFENSE

I. Timeline

1. **Winter term of PhD2 (year 1):** the student drafts the CRP proposal in ENGL 788. The student meets with prospective supervisor(s). By the middle of the semester or earlier, the student arranges to work with a supervisor.
2. **15 May of PhD2:** the student submits CRP proposal to GAC.
3. After the student has passed the proposal stage, the student drafts the CRP itself over the course of **PhD3 (year 2)**. **This stage need not take the full year.** The student works out a rough schedule with the supervisor. Student gives a formal presentation of an aspect of his/her ongoing work during the PhD3 colloquium, which takes place toward the end of **fall term of PhD3**. As the student continues to draft the CRP, he/she finds two committee members (in addition to the supervisor) and discusses the project with them. When a draft is complete, student gives it to the supervisor and committee members before turning in a finished version. Student finishes and defends the CRP no later than the **end of winter term of PhD3**.
4. **Within three weeks of submission**, committee members determine if the CRP is ready to proceed to the oral exam.¹ After all committee members have had sufficient time to read the CRP, the student will have a preliminary exam meeting with the committee, scheduled by the supervisor. This meeting follows one in which the supervisor has met with the committee members, and together they have come up with a list of questions and further readings for the student to prepare before the exam (**See section II below**). When the preliminary meeting has been completed, the supervisor submits a “Report on Preliminary Meeting” form (see “forms” in the graduate portion of the website) to the Graduate Program Coordinator, stating the areas for questioning, describing any additional readings that have been agreed upon, and recording the exam date.
5. **The CRP exam will be held no earlier than two weeks after the preliminary meeting** (approx. 1.5 hours) (**See section III below**). Before the exam the student prepares answers to the questions the committee has prepared and completes the suggested readings. After the exam is finished, the supervisor submits a “Report on Examination” form to the Graduate Coordinator (see “forms” in the graduate portion of the website).

¹ Any member who believes that the project is not ready for examination must convey this opinion in writing to the supervisor within three weeks of receiving the project. If, within these three weeks, a majority of the exam committee members (i.e., at least two members of the three-person committee) agree that the project is ready to be examined, then the supervisor will schedule the preliminary meeting. A member's failure to express reservations about the project's readiness constitutes, by default, agreement that the exam should proceed. If two committee members judge that the project is not ready for examination, the supervisor will convene a special meeting of the committee with the student. At this meeting, members will clearly identify those features of the student's work that they believe to be unsatisfactory. If only one exam committee member judges that the project is not ready, then these reservations can be presented during the preliminary meeting as areas for further reading and/or for questioning and discussion during the exam.

II: QUESTIONS IN PREPARATION FOR THE CRP EXAM

The committee will give the student approximately 6-8 questions to expect at the CRP exam. Most of them are quite specific about:

- a) Claims made in the CRP
- b) How these claims might extend to other texts/objects of analysis
- c) What a (provisional) extension of the CRP argument might be (i.e., future publications)
- d) How the student might more precisely identify the CRP argument in a critical tradition or conversation
- e) How the student might more precisely contextualize the CRP argument in a particular intellectual or historical narrative
- f) Items included on the preliminary bibliography that pertain to your field more broadly, not just the CRP topic

The committee will likely assign additional readings to supplement the CRP Bibliography, to be read in preparation for the exam. These can be entire books, specific chapters of books, articles, or coverage assignments like “please familiarize yourself with thing-theory before the exam.” (If the materials are not readily available in or through the McGill library, the student should communicate that to the committee immediately.)

III: THE CRP ORAL EXAM

1. The student opens the exam by reading a prepared document (a presentation of approx. 15-20 min.) that gives an overview of the project, perhaps explains how it was conceived (did it extend from an MA thesis? Coursework at McGill?), and gestures to the future use of the project. It is also a good idea to review how and why this research matters to the student’s field: does it continue an ongoing discussion in X studies, perhaps offering a new perspective or complicating one that is conventional?
2. The supervisor and committee members pose the questions that were circulated at the preliminary meeting.

Note: the student must be sure to really answer the questions! The questions should not be used as jumping off points for other ideas. The committee members have asked them because the questions reflect something that is missing or underdeveloped in the CRP itself. The exam is meant to indicate where the student needs to go in the future.

3. When all of the questions have been asked and answered, the student leaves the room while the committee confers.