

# Oral Exam & Reading List

## Oral Exam

- MA exams last 45 minutes and are conducted in English.
- Students propose **three topics** to the examiner. Together they must cover **at least two genres and two historical periods** (e.g., the twentieth-century gothic short story; the nineteenth-century realist novel; the Western in literature and film). A **minimum of three titles** per topic is required.
  - The topic of the MA thesis may not appear!
  - Topics will be generated from the individual reading list (see below).
- Primarily, literary studies topics are examined. In consultation with your examiner, other media may also be chosen (e.g., comics, film, music, theater productions, TV series, painting, photography).
- **Students must register for the oral exam with the student office (“Studienbüro”)** after the date has been agreed upon with the examiner. The student office will then send the examination record form to the examiner.  
<https://www.slm.uni-hamburg.de/studium/studienbuero.html>
- No later than one week before the exam date, students send the examiner a **thesis paper (max. two pages)**. The paper lists the topics, including the primary works, and **2-3 theses** in bullet points. At least **three secondary sources per topic** should also be listed. The examiner should have all the necessary information to prepare for the exam.
- The oral exam can take place one day after the thesis submission. The thesis and the exam must be completed within two semesters.
- Should the exam be cancelled due to illness, a medical certificate must be submitted to the student office, a new date agreed upon, and a new examination record form sent.

## Reading List

Studying means reading, not just in seminars but also during semester breaks. In our MA program, students are expected to curate an individual reading list. It is the basis for developing the topics of the oral exam. The list should have a clear focus on either American or British culture, texts, and media, depending on the affiliation of your chosen supervisor. Students who pursue a double degree in British and American literature and culture can sort their list accordingly at the end of their studies.

### Compiling and editing the Reading List:

- Min. 20 titles of primary material (novels, plays, films, etc.). 15 should belong to your examiner's affiliation (either British or American); 5 should belong to the other subject
- Min. 10 titles secondary literature

The curation of the individual reading list with reference to both general reading lists (see links below) is a process. It begins with a **first draft** to be submitted in the **Advanced Theories and Methods Seminar**. It counts as a **course requirement** ("Studienleistung") for that seminar. This early draft may be revised over the course of studies so it reflects, for example, interests sparked by lectures or seminars. Faculty members with examining rights offer consultations on the reading list during their office hours; research focuses can be viewed on the website. Please feel free to reach out.

Suggestions: For the first draft, students may draw on their previous reading, viewing, and listening experience. They may use seminars and the general reading list for inspiration (links below). Use the reading list as an occasion to extend it for your own use. Keep track of which primary texts you have encountered during your master's studies; this can become a resource that shows you orientations or gaps for future reading.

An **updated reading list** is shared with the first examiner as students prepare to register for their MA thesis. During office hours, they discuss possible topics for the oral exam, using their reading list.

### Formatting the Reading List:

- The list of titles must be complete (min. 20+10), and the examiner must have enough information to locate the works. Less information is needed for primary titles than for secondary sources. MLA format is requested for secondary sources.
- The list may be sorted by author name, title, date/first edition, the author's birth year, etc. The type of ordering should be apparent and consistent. The 5 titles from the other subject should be marked (e.g., English Studies\* and American Studies #). Primary and secondary titles should be listed under separate headings.

### Resources:

<https://www.slm.uni-hamburg.de/iaa/studium/download-studium/materialien/2023-04-ma-lektuereliste-amerikanistik.pdf> (general reading list American Studies)

<https://www.slm.uni-hamburg.de/iaa/studium/download-studium/materialien/2023-07-lektuereliste-anglistik.pdf> (general reading list British Studies)