THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION
MLA in Liberal Studies

The Comprehensive Exam fulfills the MLA in Liberal Studies requirement for a comprehensive examination prior to the student receiving credit for the thesis or project. The exam should enable students to synthesize important work done in courses, to hone in on crucial issues in their field(s), and/or to lay the foundation for their thesis or project. **The Comprehensive Exam process must begin within eight (8) weeks/two (2) months of the beginning of the semester prior to the Exam being taken.**

The exam will proceed in the following manner (outlined below):

1. To begin the process, the student will put together an exam committee upon completion of 13-16 credit hours toward the MLA degree. After consulting with the Director of the MLA in Liberal Studies program, the student will contact previous faculty members (from USFSP graduate courses taken toward the MLA degree) and request that they serve on this committee. **Three are required;** they should represent different areas of the student’s research or related work. Once all have agreed, the student will send an email to the MLA program director indicating the names of committee members. This email must contain only this information and be given the subject heading, “Comps Committee for ________ (student’s name).” The student will consult with the MLA Director to set a date for the Comprehensive Exam. The exam should be taken at the end, or near the end, of the student’s coursework. Once the date is set, the MLA Director will inform committee members and the student in writing via email. **Please note that all of this preliminary work should be taken care of the semester before the student’s exam dates.**

2. Well in advance of the exam (no later than twelve (12) weeks prior to the semester in which the exam is to be taken), the student will work with individual committee members to determine reading lists to prepare for exam questions. These primary and secondary sources should be drawn from previous coursework, provide additional foundational reading for the thesis/project, and/or cover methods that are necessary for the student’s degree.

3. Based on these lists, the MLA Program Director will gather questions from the faculty members (i.e., Committee) and compile the questions into a document with full instructors for the student. **This document will be the official Comprehensive Examination.** The MLA Program Director will then provide this document to the student at the beginning of the start of the test week. The student will then choose one (1) question from each of the three (3) sections from that document. The student will have one week (seven days) to produce responses to the three questions. Each essay approximately 1,250-1,500 words (double-spaced, 12 point font), the total exam ranging from 3,750-4,500 words. (Length of the exam may vary depending on disciplinary field(s) of study.) Upon completion of the exam, the student will then send the completed work to the MLA Program Director. The committee members will read and evaluate the student’s performance on each essay as follows: **High Pass, Pass, Low Pass, Fail.** If the student fails any sections of the exam, he or she will be able to retake that section(s). The committee has the option of writing new questions for the exam or asking the student to revise responses to the original questions. In order to pass the MLA Comprehensive Exam, the student must have a passing score (high pass, pass, or low pass) on all three sections. The MLA Program Director will then notify the student of the results.
PREPARATION STEPS (Outlined from above):

1. **Compile** Exam Committee upon completion of 13-16 credit hours toward the MLA degree.
   
   a. **Consult** with Program Director of MLA in Liberal Studies.
   
   b. **Contact** previous faculty members (from USFSP graduate courses taken toward the MLA degree) and request that they serve on this committee. **THREE ARE REQUIRED.**
   
   c. **Email** to the MLA program director indicating the names of committee members, once they have agreed to serve on the student’s Committee.
      
      i. This email must contain **only** this information and be given the **subject heading**, “Comps Committee for ________ (student’s name).”
   
   d. **Consult** with the MLA Director to **set a date** for the Comprehensive Exam.
      
      ~ **Please note:** **All** of this preliminary work should be taken care of **the semester before** the student’s exam dates ~

2. **Determine** reading lists, along with Committee Members, to prepare for exam questions **no later than** twelve (12) weeks prior to exam date.

EXAMINATION (Steps 3-5 below are the actual Exam)

3. **Choose** one (1) topic prompt from each of these three (3) question areas, provided to the student by the MLA Program Director. **SEE #3 above for additional details.**

4. **Produce** responses to the three (3) questions within one (1) week (seven (7) days).

5. **Provide** responses to the MLA Program Director.

Upon completion of the comprehensive examination, the committee and appropriate department members will send an e-mail to the MLA Program Director, as well as the student, indicating whether the student has passed or failed the Comprehensive Exam. The Program Director will then send an e-mail the student validating the results of the examination.

*Please note that students must be enrolled for a minimum of two (2) hours of graduate credit during the semester when the comprehensive examination is taken. If the exam is taken between semesters, the student must be enrolled for a minimum of two (2) hours of graduate credit in the semester before or following the exam.*