.5 Area Exam

In addition to a written exam, students will construct and orally defend an annotated syllabus in an area other than the one their written exam covered.[1] For instance, students who passed the written culture area exam could complete their .5 assignment for race and ethnicity. By completing the syllabus assignment, students will gain expertise in another substantive area. Students need to complete the .5 area exam requirement by the end of May of their third year, though ideally by the spring mid-term break.

The annotated syllabus can be for an undergraduate or graduate course, and it can be for an introductory, general class (e.g., economic sociology) or a specialized class (e.g., sociology of money). Students will first meet with their advisor to talk about the area in which they would like to complete the syllabus assignment as well as to decide its level (undergraduate or graduate) and type (introductory/general or specialized). After this discussion, students will email the chair of the area exam committee stating their intent to take the .5 assignment and providing a brief explanation (one to two paragraphs) about why they want to complete the assignment for either: (1) a graduate or undergraduate course; and (2) an introductory or specialized class. Students should also indicate when they will submit their written materials (see below for the timeline).

Students should send this information to the committee chair no later than August 15 between their second and third years in our program. Then, sometime during the first two weeks of the fall semester, the student and committee chair will meet to decide when the written materials for the annotated syllabus will be due, confirm the level and type for the assignment, and discuss any questions. The latest the materials can be submitted is the Monday after the spring mid-semester break in the students' third year. Students can submit the written materials for the .5 area exam requirement prior to taking their written exam, assuming they have talked to their advisor about doing so and the committee chair agrees.

The count of articles or chapters included on the annotated syllabus—either as assigned or supplementary readings—should be approximately equivalent to half of the length of the exam list (so if the exam lists 100 readings, the .5 option would include approximately 50 readings). It is up to the discretion of the exam committee to what extent they want students to use the readings listed on the exam list or find original readings apart from the exams list. Students can include other readings as they see fit.

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[1] In consultation with their advisors, students can request to replace the annotated syllabus assignment with a paper option if they believe this option would significantly benefit them professionally. To do so, they would send a single-spaced page or so document to the DGS that explains what area they want to complete the paper option, the specific type of paper option they want to write (such as an *Annual Review* type article), and why they believe this option is considerably better for them professionally than is the annotated syllabus assignment. After receiving the document, the DGS will meet with the area exam committee to discuss the feasibility of the proposed paper option (generally within two weeks of receiving the document). Based on this discussion, the DGS would let students know whether they can replace the annotated syllabus assignment with their proposed option.

In addition to the annotated syllabus, students are required to create slides (in PowerPoint, for instance) for one class to demonstrate how they would teach it. After students submit their annotated syllabus and slides to the committee, they will schedule an oral defense (generally within two weeks of submitting the written materials). During the sixty-minute oral defense, committee members will ask questions–such as the rationale for the inclusion or exclusion of the readings or the assignments and overall structure of the course–about the annotated syllabus/slides and students will respond to them.

At the conclusion of the oral defense, students will receive one of the following three grades: (1) pass; (2) revise and resubmit; or (3) fail. For all three outcomes, the chair of the exam committee will provide comments to students (generally within two weeks of the oral defense).

If students receive a revise and resubmit, they have two weeks to resubmit their written materials to the committee, including a memo that details how they responded to the chair's comments about what was lacking for a pass. Based on the revisions made to the written assignment and the memo, students will receive (generally within two weeks of resubmitting) a passing or failing grade.

If students do not pass the .5 assignment after the revise and resubmit, they can retake it, assuming they have not failed their written exam. Per departmental policy, if the student has failed after a revise and resubmit the student would be dismissed from the program as the .5 assignment would be the second failed exam. Both the written and oral defense parts need to be repeated. Because the .5 assignment must be completed by the end of May of the students' third year, the latest the written materials can be submitted for the retake is April 15.

Students who fail the .5 assignment on their initial attempt would follow the same process outlined above unless they also failed the written exam. If this is the case, per departmental policy, students would be dismissed from the program given that they failed two area exams. Students would also be dismissed from the program if they failed the .5 assignment twice.