Art History, PhD

Requirements

The Doctor of Philosophy program in art history requires a minimum of 72 s.h. of graduate credit. Of the 72 s.h., at least 39 s.h. must be earned while registered in the UI Graduate College, after formal program admission. For details, visit the Graduate College Manual of Rules and Regulations Section XII C. Students must maintain a cumulative grade-point average of at least 3.50. They may count a maximum of 38 s.h. of work completed for the MA toward the PhD, excluding credit earned in language courses. Students are allowed only one semester of academic probation.

Students are expected to acquire great breadth and depth of knowledge in the discipline of art history, achieve a high level of expertise in a specialized field, and demonstrate professional speaking and writing skills. The program provides them with scholarly challenges, research skills, and mentoring necessary for professional development and successful careers.

Students major in one of the following distribution fields: Asian, ancient Mediterranean, medieval, Renaissance and Baroque, 18th- and 19th-century European, American, and modern/contemporary. In addition, candidates minor in two fields: any in the preceding list plus African. One minor must be in an art history distribution field that is non-contiguous with the major field. The second minor may be in any art history distribution field, or it may be in a relevant discipline outside of art history, subject to approval from the art history faculty.

For more detailed information, consult the Art History Graduate Bulletin on the School of Art, Art History, and Design website.

Required Courses

Students must satisfactorily complete ARTH:5000 History and Methods, even if they have completed a similar course at another institution (students who have completed the course for a master's degree or other previous work at the University of Iowa are exempt). They must register for an art history seminar in their first three semesters of PhD coursework (or in their fifth, sixth, and seventh semesters of graduate study), before ARTH:7010 PhD Readings and the comprehensive exam.

Students must register for and satisfactorily complete ARTH:6020 Art History Colloquium for 1 s.h. each semester that they are enrolled for 9 s.h. or more or have an RA/TA appointment. Students who register for fewer than 9 s.h. are strongly encouraged to attend. Art history colloquium is a monthly series of lectures, panel discussions, or field experience focusing on professional development. Planned in conjunction with the graduate Art History Society, this requirement is integral to the degree program and is an important avenue toward professionalism in the field. Attendance is required (any absence needs to be approved by the head of art history before the missed meeting).

Students must attend at least six lectures by visiting scholars in art history during the course of their enrollment as PhD graduate students (proof of attendance is provided by short written responses of 150–250 words turned in to the director of graduate studies within two weeks of the lecture) and must register for an art history seminar in each of the first three semesters of their PhD coursework and prior to both the PhD readings course and comprehensive examinations.

Students may count up to 6 s.h. of credit earned for dissertation research toward the 72 s.h. required for the degree. Courses outside the curriculum of the School of Art, Art History, and Design's art history division do not carry art history credit.

Directed Studies

Normally, a maximum of 6 s.h. earned in ARTH:6040 Directed Studies may be applied toward the semester-hour requirement for the PhD, although doctoral students may petition the art history faculty for permission to apply up to 9 s.h.

Language Requirement

PhD students must demonstrate proficiency in French or German for admission to the PhD program in art history. They must demonstrate proficiency in a second non-English language, generally one relevant to the chosen area of research, by the end of the third semester in the PhD program. Students may demonstrate proficiency by:

- two years of university-level coursework;
- earning a grade of B or above in an advanced language course numbered 3000 or above;
- achieving at least an 80% proficiency score on the level 5 milestone of the relevant Rosetta Stone language program; or
- scoring 500 or above in the University of Iowa World Languages Placement Test.

In exceptional circumstances, a student may make a direct petition to the faculty upon receiving a recommendation from their advisor. Language courses do not carry degree credit.

PhD Committee

The PhD committee consists of the student's dissertation advisor, who is responsible for the major field; two members responsible for the two minor fields; and at least two additional members. Of these five, four must be tenured or tenure-track faculty members from the art history division. One must be from outside the division and must be a member of the Graduate College faculty. When appropriate, committees may include additional members.

Comprehensive Examination

Upon completion of course requirements, the PhD candidate takes three written comprehensive examinations. The major exam consists of six questions and lasts six hours; the two minor exams each consist of three questions and last three hours. The exams are taken on any three days within one week (Monday through Friday).

The scope of the comprehensive exams is determined in consultation with the candidate's degree committee supervisor and the committee members responsible for the two minor fields.

Oral Comprehensive Examination

Within approximately two weeks of completing the three written exams, the candidate meets with the degree committee for the oral comprehensive examination, which concentrates on questions that arise from the written comprehensive exams.

Dissertation Proposal

Each student must complete a publishable dissertation that makes an original contribution to the art history discipline and demonstrates evidence of superior understanding of critical issues in the candidate's chosen specialization field. As soon as possible after completing the comprehensive examinations, the candidate submits a dissertation proposal to the degree committee supervisor and subsequently to the degree committee. Visit the Art History Graduate Bulletin for complete instructions.

The committee meets as a group with the candidate to discuss the dissertation proposal and to offer comments and suggestions. The proposal must be submitted to the committee at least two weeks before the approval meeting. The proposal includes a 1–2 page abstract, a 10–15 page précis that includes a review of the state of the field, and a bibliography.

After the proposal has been approved by the committee, the candidate circulates an abstract to the entire art history faculty. The candidate must give a public presentation on the dissertation topic no later than the end of the semester following the degree committee's approval. The presentation is scheduled with the head of art history.

Final Examination

Upon completing a dissertation, the candidate meets with the PhD committee for an oral defense of the dissertation. The oral defense constitutes the final examination for the PhD. The successful completion of this examination normally marks the last stage in the candidate's fulfillment of requirements.