

NOTES ON THE ORAL EXAM IN SOCIAL STUDIES

Your Social Studies oral examination will take place in April or early May of 2022, after you have received your senior thesis evaluations. The exam will last approximately 1½ hours and will be divided into two parts: the thesis defense proper and the general exam. You will be asked to submit a 1000-word intellectual autobiography to the Social Studies office shortly before the exam. The intellectual autobiography will serve as a basis for your general exam and should cover your coursework in Social Studies with special emphasis on tutorial work and key texts and questions covered in your focus field. A successful intellectual autobiography will identify the theme or themes that you have studied. It will describe the path you have taken, starting with Social Studies 10, and it will normally make reference to at least two other courses you have taken in Social Studies.

In the thesis defense, you will be expected to discuss, defend, and elaborate on the substantive themes developed in your thesis. In addition to a careful consideration of the strengths and shortcomings of the thesis, the defense requires an understanding of and an oral response to the written comments and criticisms of the evaluators.

The general examination is a test of your ability to demonstrate command of the social theoretical concerns of Social Studies 10 and also the larger substantive issues within the focus field. Because Social Studies is an interdisciplinary program in which students pursue different paths of study, the general examination is tailored to the individual student. A successful exam is one in which you can explicitly link, when relevant, the substantive and empirical foci of your course work to that of the classical theorists considered in sophomore tutorial. In addition, you should be able to elaborate on the theoretical and empirical issues that have framed your education in Social Studies.

We will be holding a meeting on Wednesday, March 23rd to discuss the oral exam and honors process in Social Studies. You should also discuss your oral exam with your thesis supervisor and you may wish to consult your academic advisor as well. As Director of Studies, Anya Bassett oversees oral exams and the honors process, so questions may be addressed to her.