

# Italian Studies Program Guide

Department of French & Italian  
Indiana University – Bloomington  
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## Introduction to Areas of Study

Courses covering all periods of Italian literature and culture are offered on a regular basis, and faculty expertise covers all periods from the Middle Ages to the present time, with a particular inclination for interdisciplinary approaches (comparative literature and Italian, literature and the other arts, cinema and media studies, Italian American studies, popular culture, manuscript studies, pedagogy). Strong allied programs in European Studies, Comparative Literature, Art History, Medieval Studies, Renaissance Studies, Literary Theory, Cinema and Media Studies, and Gender Studies, as well as the distinguished Jacobs School of Music, provide unequalled opportunities for the inquisitive graduate student. For the Italian graduate students who have financial support from our department, please note that the fee remission only covers courses that are directly related to your graduate degree.

## Degrees and Requirements

This document has been compiled as a reference guide and resource for graduate students in the Department of French and Italian. However, for the purposes of degree conferral, the University Graduate School recognizes ONLY the University Graduate School Bulletin. Students are automatically evaluated using the bulletin in effect at the time of matriculation but may request to use a later bulletin. Degree completion is evaluated based on the approved version of the Graduate Bulletin in its entirety; degree requirements cannot be mixed and matched across different versions of the bulletin.

For full information on Graduate School policies, please consult the Indiana University Graduate School Bulletin online at the following URL:

[graduate.indiana.edu/academics-research/bulletin.shtml](https://graduate.indiana.edu/academics-research/bulletin.shtml)

## The Master of Arts in Italian Studies

### The Degree

The MA degree in Italian can serve as a stepping stone to the PhD and can also prepare students to teach in private high schools and colleges or to work in various fields such as software development, translation, publishing, or business. A candidate can obtain the MA in two years. Up to nine hours of transfer credit may be counted toward the degree with the approval of the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) and the College Graduate Office. Courses used to fulfill requirements for an MA degree completed at another university cannot be transferred while the student is in the MA program at IU but may be counted later toward the PhD (see below).

### Degree Requirements

- 30 credit hours of graduate work with at least 20 hours in Italian.
- Written examinations on major authors and works from medieval to contemporary times.
- No thesis.

## The Exam

There is a Master's exam session held on the first Saturday of each semester (Fall and Spring). It consists of a six-hour written examination based on reading lists covering all periods of Italian literature and culture. Candidates who wish to pursue a PhD degree must take their Master's exam within their fourth semester of classes. Master's candidates who do not intend to earn a PhD may choose to take their exam after their fourth semester of classes. Students who choose this option will not be considered for any further financial support. Students must signal their intent to sit for the exam to the Director of Graduate Studies (with a copy to the Graduate Student Services Coordinator) at least 60 days prior to the scheduled exam date. In particular cases (i.e., a terminal Master's degree with focus on language instruction), the faculty may accept a special (pedagogical) project in lieu of the written examination.

To qualify for the Master's exams, students must have completed all courses previously taken. Specifically, students with Incompletes will not be allowed to sit for the exams. Missing coursework to remove Incomplete grades must be submitted no later than 2 weeks prior to the date of the exam, to ensure enough time for a grade to be assigned and processed. In case of late submission, we cannot guarantee that the Incomplete will be removed in time for the student to take the exam.

Each section of the exam will include a question requesting the student to analyze a specific literary passage or film sequence. The student will have to choose at least one question of this type. The students can choose whether to handwrite the exam or to type it on an IU computer. Students can write the answers for the MA exam in either English or Italian.

All exams are anonymous. Only the Graduate Student Services Coordinator and the DGS are required to know which students are taking an exam in a session. The students will not write their name on their exam. They will mark the exam with a five-digit numerical code and will write the same code in a note to be placed in a sealed envelope. No professor (not even the DGS) will have access to these codes until after all grades have been assigned.

The Master's exam will be judged by the entire tenured and tenure-track faculty according to the following scale:

- HIGH PASS = exceptional knowledge of the subject matter and outstanding critical ability.
- PASS = good knowledge and good critical understanding of the subject.
- LOW PASS = satisfactory knowledge of the material but lacking full critical comprehension.  
(The faculty may decide that an extra oral exam on the subject is necessary.)
- FAIL = insufficient knowledge and/or critical comprehension.

In some cases, the faculty may decide that an extra oral exam is required. Students who receive a FAIL or a LOW PASS will not be admitted to the PhD program. Students who pass the exam and complete their course work need to file for their Master's degree with the Graduate School to have it appear on their transcript.

If the Italian faculty decides to change the exam system for the Master's degree, all students in their first year of classes will have to comply with the new rules.

## Time Limit

The requirements for the MA degree must be completed within five consecutive years. All transfer credits must also be completed within five years. The five year time limit is effective at the start of the earliest coursework counting towards the degree. For example, a student who first enrolled in the program in Fall 2016 would need to complete all degree requirements (including course work and exams) by December 2021. However, if that student transferred credit that was completed Fall 2015, then all degree requirements would need to be completed by December 2020. Revalidation of coursework completed before this five-year period is possible in exceptional cases (see the Graduate School Bulletin.)

## The PhD in Italian Studies

### The Degree

The PhD program is intended to train scholar-teachers to do advanced research of professional quality in their specialized field, to teach courses in this field at all graduate and undergraduate levels, and to teach undergraduate courses in Italian language, literature and culture. Students are encouraged to take many different courses in order to discover areas of special interest, acquire the background necessary for the exams, and prepare for a dissertation as well as a career. Up to 30 hours of transfer credit may be counted toward the PhD degree with approval of the DGS and the Graduate School. See "Steps Toward PhD Completion" in *Section 2: The Graduate Handbook* for more information.

### Degree Requirements

- 35 credit hours of graduate course work beyond the MA for a total of 65 credit hours of course work, among which generally 12 credit hours must be in an approved outside minor area. Credit hours required for the minor are determined by the respective minor department. Check with the department offering your chosen minor for complete details.
- 25 thesis (M875), elective, or other graduate credits selected in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies.
- Reading proficiency in one of the following foreign languages: French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Classical Greek or Latin.
- PhD examinations (see below).
- Dissertation.

### Language Requirements

Reading proficiency is normally demonstrated either by exam (consult the appropriate department for details) or by completing the second half of the appropriate graduate course series (FRIT-F 492, HISP-S 492, GER-G 492, CLAS-L 400, etc.) with a grade of B or better. Please note that the credits for CLAS-L300 and L400 count toward the 30 hours of MA or the 65 hours of PhD coursework. The 491-492 sequence, regardless of language, does not carry graduate credit.

Students may request to replace one of the languages listed under Degree Requirements with a language that is not present in the list but that addresses their dissertation topic directly. The special request for the substitution can be made only after the candidate has passed at least the first part of the PhD exam. The request must be submitted in written form to the Director of Graduate Studies and the director (or proposed director) of the dissertation.

## Qualifying Examination

The PhD exam is divided into two parts:

1. An in-depth written examination covering all periods of Italian literature and culture, including film.
2. The submission of a dissertation project.

### *Part 1*

Students must take the first part of their PhD exam no later than their 4th semester in the PhD program. To qualify for the first part of the PhD exam, students must have no Incompletes on their academic record. Missing coursework to remove Incomplete grades must be submitted no later than 2 weeks prior to the date of the exam, to ensure enough time for a grade to be assigned and processed. In case of late submission, we cannot guarantee that the Incomplete will be removed in time for the student to take the exam.

Part 1 of the PhD exam will be held in two sessions: one on the first Friday of the semester (9am–2pm), and the second session the next day, Saturday (9am–2pm). At each session, candidates will be asked to answer three questions from a list of topics. In the first session, the questions will cover the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the Baroque; the second session will cover the eighteenth century to the present, including cinema.

Students must indicate their intention to sit for the exam to the Director of Graduate Studies (with a copy to the Graduate Student Services Coordinator) at least 60 days prior to the scheduled exam date. Students are urged to discuss the reading list with the Director of Graduate Studies at least two months before the exam. Please consult the current reading list on the departmental website to prepare for the exam. Previous sample exams are available for consultation from the Graduate Student Services Coordinator.

Each section of the exam will include a question requesting the student to analyze a specific literary passage. The student will have to choose at least one question of this type. Students must write at least one answer in English and one in Italian in each of the two sessions. The students can choose whether to handwrite the exam or to type it on an IU computer.

Those who take the exam will remain anonymous to the evaluators until the final results have been calculated, following the same procedures as for the MA exam.

### *Part 2*

The second part of the PhD exam consists of the submission of a preliminary description of a dissertation project of approximately 20 to 25 pages of length (including a select bibliography). This description should be considered as a preliminary, less specific, draft of the dissertation proposal.

Students must submit their dissertation project as soon as possible after having passed the first part of their PhD exam, and no later than the following regularly scheduled exam.

The project must include a presentation of: 1) the topic the student intends to work on for the PhD dissertation; 2) the main thesis of the work; 3) the role and relevance of the thesis in the context of the existing scholarship on the topic; 4) a plan of the organization of the dissertation, divided by chapters; 5) a bibliography. The project can be in English or in Italian.

Students are urged to discuss the preparation of their project with the professor or professors selected as potential dissertation advisor(s), as well as with the other professors whose area of specialization most closely relates to the chosen topic.

Once completed, the dissertation project is to be submitted to all tenured and tenure-track faculty of the Italian program, both via email as an attachment and in hardcopy in the faculty members' mailboxes. After the dissertation project has been approved, the student should start developing it into the official dissertation proposal.

### *Rules applying to both parts of the exam*

The two parts of the PhD exam will be evaluated by all tenured and tenure-track faculty. The first part of the exam will be graded on the same grade scale used for the Master's examination. If a student receives a "Low Pass", the faculty may decide that an extra oral exam is required. Students who receive a "Low Pass" must discuss their exam and their plans to improve their academic performance with the Director of Graduate Studies. The second part of the exam will be graded on a pass / fail basis, and students will receive feedback and suggestions about their project. Students who fail an exam may be allowed, at the discretion of the faculty, to retake the exam during the subsequent examination session, or to submit a new version of their dissertation project.

Students who fail one or both parts of the exam may be put on academic probation. Failing a part of the exam can result in the loss of teaching support and other forms of University financial aid in the subsequent academic year. Students who are not allowed to retake the exam or to resubmit their dissertation project, or who fail two exams, will not be permitted to continue in the program.

If the Italian faculty decides to revise or modify the PhD examinations or the reading lists, students who have not yet been admitted to the doctoral program or who have not yet completed at least one examination (MA or PhD) under the previous system or reading list will be required to follow the new system. Changes will only be made with ample preparation time remaining for students before the next exam session.

## **Acceptance of the Dissertation Proposal**

The student selects 4-5 faculty members to serve on their Research Committee, which will evaluate the dissertation. After the intended Research Committee members have read the dissertation proposal, the candidate may be asked to meet with them to explain the proposal and to receive suggestions as to how to proceed with the dissertation. At that time, the committee members approve the proposal or suggest changes be made before approval. The student then proceeds to the Nomination of Research Committee eDoc, to which they must attach a dissertation proposal.

Some fellowship applications ask for the date of the dissertation proposal defense. In our program, we consider this the date that Part 2 of the PhD exams is passed.

## **Incompletes**

- Incompletes should be taken only as a last resort and be quickly converted into grades before the beginning of the next term (in the case of Incompletes taken in the spring semester, students are required to remove them within three weeks).

- Students with one or more Incompletes on their record at the beginning of a semester may lose their Student Academic Appointment (AI or GA position).
- Students should be working to fulfill degree requirements at a reasonable rate (please refer to MA and PhD exams sections for the required timing).

To qualify for the MA exam, or for either part of the PhD exam, students must have no Incompletes on their academic record. Missing coursework to remove Incomplete grades must be submitted no later than 2 weeks prior to the date of the exam, to ensure enough time for a grade to be assigned and processed. In case of late submission, we cannot guarantee that the Incomplete will be removed in time for the student to take the exam.

## **Course Permissions**

### **Independent Studies**

Independent studies (FRIT-M 815) are meant to give graduate students an opportunity to pursue personal research projects and broaden their understanding of Italian culture. These courses are not appropriate for preparation for the MA exam and the first part of the PhD exam. Independent studies should not replace in-class courses; therefore, they should cover topics that are not routinely taught in other courses, and they should be taken during the summer or in semesters in which the student is already taking all courses offered in the Italian program.

There is a limit of one independent study per student.