

The Master of Arts in Liberal Arts and Sciences
MALAS MA Comprehensive Exam | May 3, 2013

The MALAS Comprehensive MA Exam questions allow students to demonstrate their familiarity with the specific works on the reading lists they have developed in conjunction with their faculty field advisors. As MALAS is an interdisciplinary studies program, graduate students should attempt to address phenomena in ways that demonstrate their mastery of ideas, theories, methods, and conventions associated with more than one field. Although students preparing for the exam will be encouraged to read as much of the relevant criticism as is feasible, they will not be held specifically responsible for knowing any particular criticism of individual works; that said, showing familiarity in the responses with dominant critical debates in and across fields is welcome.

Grading Guidelines

I. Distinction: A superior exam

- is a clearly focused response to the topic in fluent, dynamic prose
- is well-organized and well-developed
- has unified and coherent paragraphs
- incorporates specific and appropriate references to texts that were part of the graduate students' MA exam list.
- demonstrates the graduate students' command with the subject matter in more than one specific discipline—in other words, the student shows strong familiarity with the material in ways that demonstrate a distinctive command of interdisciplinary studies and/or cultural studies protocols, practices, and traditions.

2. Pass: An adequate exam

- demonstrates a thoughtful response to the topic within an overall plan, even if the treatment of some points is only perfunctory
- logically develops ideas in ordered paragraphs
- may have lapses in providing transitions
- may occasionally rely on unsupported assertions and generalizations.
- demonstrates the graduate students' familiarity with the subject matter in more than one specific discipline.

3. Fail: An inadequate exam

- discusses the topic only generally or does not directly respond to the topic
- does not follow a reasonable or appropriate pattern of development
- lacks specific textual support for assertions and generalizations
- fails to develop appropriate examples
- demonstrates no command of the subject matter in more than one specific discipline.

Comprehensive Exam Reading List | Master of Arts
MALAS MA Comprehensive Exam | May 3, 2013

AREA I

Foundations of Afro-Pessimism

Supervisory Faculty: R. Hernandez

Black Skin, White Masks

Franz Fanon

Slavery and Social Death

Orlando Patterson

Scenes of Subjection

Saidiya V. Hartman

*Red, White and Black: Cinema and the
Structure of U.S. Antagonisms*

Frank B. Wilderson

“Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An
American Grammar Book”

Hortense J. Spillers

“Through the Zone of Nonbeing: A
Reading of *Black Skin, White Masks* in
Celebration of Fanon’s Eightieth
Birthday”

Lewis Gordon

“The Case of Blackness”

Fred Moten

“The Social Life of Social Death: On
Afro-Pessimism and Black Optimism”

Jared Sexton

AREA II

**Racial Neoliberalism and the
Politics of Space**

Supervisory Faculty: K. Swanson

*Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis and
Opposition in Globalizing California*

Ruth Wilson Gilmore

*The Threat of Race: Reflections on Racial
Neoliberalism*

David Theo Goldberg

A Brief History of Neoliberalism

David Harvey

*Multicultural girlhood: Racism, Sexuality,
and the Conflicted Spaces of American
Education*

Mary E. Thomas

*Space, Place, and Violence: Violence and
the Embodied Geographies of Race, Sex
and Gender*

James A. Tyner

“The Annihilation of Space by Law: the
Roots and Implication of Anti-Homeless
Laws in the United States”

Don Mitchell

“From Slavery to Mass Incarceration:
Rethinking the ‘Race Question’ in the
US”

Loic Wacquant

“The Militarization of Urban Marginality:
Lessons from the Brazilian Metropolis”

Loic Wacquant

AREA III

**The Ideological Argument for
Multilingual Education in the
United States**

Supervisory Faculty: C. Alfaro

*Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of
Language in African Literature*
Ngugi wa Thiongo

*English with an Accent: Language, Ideology
and Discrimination in the United States*
Rosina Lippi-Green

The Pedagogy of the Oppressed
Paulo Freire

The Hegemony of English
Donaldo Macedo

*Teaching to Transgress: Education as the
Practice of Freedom*
bell hooks

The Economy of Linguistic Exchanges
Pierre Bourdieu

*Forbidden Language: English Learners and
Restrictive Language Policies*
Patricia C. Gandara

*Culture and Power in the Classroom:
Educational Foundations for the Schooling
of Bicultural Students*
Antonia Darder

COMPREHENSIVE EXAM

MALAS | Master of Arts in Liberal Arts and Sciences

Friday, May 3, 2013

Exam Question I: FOUNDATIONS OF AFRO PESSIMISM, 8am to 9:50 am

You MAY, if you wish, use a laptop today, however, all connections to wi-fi **MUST BE DISABLED**--I have a thumb-drive to ferry your finished responses to my own workstation for printing. If your laptop does not have a USB-compatible port, you will be allowed to log-on to SDSU wi-fi at the end of each session to zap your responses to me (memo@sdsu.edu) for printing. You are also welcome to bring a blue book and several pens/markers. This is a closed-book, no notes examination—do not consult any other files on your laptop or in your possession during the exam.

CHOOSE ONE OF THE TWO FOLLOWING PROMPTS:

1. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon famously stated, “I am overdetermined from without” in reference to his experience during his first visit to Paris. Using the readings from your comprehensive exam list, critically discuss the significance of this statement in its context, and how it relates to Orlando Patterson’s notion of “social death”. Discuss how these two concepts highlight the relationship between race, colonialism and slavery, particularly as other writers of the Afro-pessimist tradition have taken up these issues and/or challenged them.

OR

2. The emergence of Afro-pessimism as a form of critique has triggered wide debate within Black, African-American and African Diasporic Studies. Using the readings from your comprehensive exam list, discuss the contours and tenets of Afro-pessimism, as well as the arguments of its detractors. What are the specifically gendered dynamics of Afro-pessimism and in what ways does Orlando Patterson’s concept of “natal alienation” figure within the debate? And, how do Gordon, Hartman, Spillers, and Wilderson address the possibilities of “black subjectivity” in this context?

COMPREHENSIVE EXAM
MALAS | Master of Arts in Liberal Arts and Sciences
Friday, May 3, 2013

Exam Question II: Racial Neo-Liberalism and the Politics of Space, 10am to 11:50am

You MAY, if you wish, use a laptop today, however, all connections to wi-fi **MUST BE DISABLED** --I have a thumb-drive to ferry your finished responses to my own workstation for printing. If your laptop does not have a USB-compatible port, you will be allowed to log-on to SDSU wi-fi at the end of each session to zap your responses to me (memo@sdsu.edu) for printing. You are also welcome to bring a blue book and several pens/markers. This is a closed-book, no notes examination—do not consult any other files on your laptop or in your possession during the exam.

CHOOSE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING TWO FOLLOWING PROMPTS:

1. Many scholars use a class analysis to explore key issues under neoliberalism. Yet, others suggest that a race analysis is more appropriate given that the poor are disproportionately brown and black in America. Drawing from the literature, explain why you think we should analyze American geographies of exclusion and marginality using race. Use examples to support your answer.

OR

2. Colonialism played a key role in shaping the geographies of the Americas, particularly in terms of race relations. Has neoliberalism changed anything? How has racial (in)equality been shaped through neoliberalism in the United States? Use the literature to support your arguments.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAM

MALAS | Master of Arts in Liberal Arts and Sciences

Friday, May 3, 2013

Exam Question III: The Ideological Argument for Multilingual Education in the United States, 12noon-1:50pm

You MAY, if you wish, use a laptop today, however, all connections to wi-fi **MUST BE DISABLED** --I have a thumb-drive to ferry your finished responses to my own workstation for printing. If your laptop does not have a USB-compatible port, you will be allowed to log-on to SDSU wi-fi at the end of each session to zap your responses to me (memo@sdsu.edu) for printing. You are also welcome to bring a blue book and several pens/markers. This is a closed-book, no notes examination—do not consult any other files on your laptop or in your possession during the exam.

CHOOSE ONE OF THE TWO FOLLOWING PROMPTS:

1) Multilingual Education in the United States

Define, discuss, and give examples of guiding principles that you can incorporate into an ideological argument for Multilingual Education in the United States that is reflective of democratic schooling and teaching practices.

OR

2) Language Policy, Curriculum Ideology, and Pedagogy

Discuss the implications and consequences of monolingualism, bilingualism, and multilingualism policy; language policy continuum of low rigor language programs ranging from subtractive bilingual (Structured English Immersion (SEI) & early exit) to additive programs (maintenance and dual language) and the role that foreign language programs play.