

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.

Area 1~ Urbanization in Latin America (Dr. Pablo Ben)

City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in Sao Paulo
Caldeira, Teresa

Planet of Slums
Davis, Mike

Laughter Out of Place
Goldstein

Beyond all Pity: My Life in the Slums of Sao Paulo
Maria de Jesus, Carolina

'Civilizing' Rio: Reform and Resistance in a Brazilian City, 1889-1930
Meade, Teresa

"The Population of Latin America, 1930-1990"
Merrick, Thomas

"The Growth of Latin American Cities, 1870-1930"
Scobie, James

Area 2~ Latin American Politics (Dr. Carruthers)

"From ALBA to CELAC Toward 'Another Integration?'"
Barra, Ximena & R.A. Dello Buono

Venezuela Political Conditions and U.S. Policy
Chisolm, Lance

Dragon in the Tropics: Hugo Chavez and the Political Economy of Revolution in Venezuela

Corrales, Javier & Penfold Michael

Hugo Chavez: Oil, Politics, and the Challenge to the U.S.
Kozloff, Nikolas

"U.S. Oil Companies in Venezuela: The Forging of an Enduring Alliance"
Salas, Miguel

Cuba and Venezuela: An Insight into Two revolutions
Sanchez, German

The Threat Closer to Home: Hugo Chavez and the War Against America
Schoen, Douglas & Michael Rowan

Area 3~ Prison Privatization (Dr. Hernandez)

Are Prisons Obsolete?
Davis, Angela

"Plantation Society and Race Relations: The Origins of Inequality"
Durant

Golden Gulag: Prison, Surplus, Crisis and the Opposition in Globalizing California
Gilmore, Ruth

Punishment for Sale: Private Prisons, Big Business, and the Incarceration Binge
Selman, Donna & Paul Leighton

Prison State: The Challenges of Mass Incarceration
Useem, Bert & Anne Piehl

COMPREHENSIVE EXAM

MALAS | Master of Arts in Liberal Arts and Sciences

Friday, May 3, 2013

Exam Question I: URBANIZATION IN LATIN AMERICA, 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. Describe the economic transformation of Latin America that led to the urbanization of the region in the second part of the twentieth century and consider how this process led to massive inequalities and the proliferation of slum development (especially since the 1990s). You should cover all the bibliography comparing changes over time and in the different countries you have studied, taking into account the different angles discussed by the materials you read.

OR

2. Explain the consequences of increasing inequality and the expansion of slums in Latin America comparing the situation with other areas of the world and considering its consequences. Discuss the impact of poverty over public opinion, the opportunities available for the young, the rise of drug trafficking, crime and violence, etc.

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Exam Question II: Latin American Politics, 10am to 11:50am

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CHOOSE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING TWO FOLLOWING PROMPTS:

1. Hugo Chavez was a polarizing figure both in Venezuela and abroad, and after his death the debate about his legacy remains polarized. To clarify that polarization, offer an analytical assessment of the political, economic, and social consequences of Chavismo in Venezuela.

OR

2. What are the political, economic, and social lessons of the Chavez era in Venezuela? Discuss the promise and failures of Chavismo, with an eye toward the implications for other “pink tide” center-left governments in Latin America.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAM

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Exam Question III: Prison Privatization, 12noon-1:50pm

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CHOOSE ONE OF THE TWO FOLLOWING PROMPTS:

1. According to Orlando Patterson, enslaved Africans exist in a precarious position of “social death.” What does Patterson mean by “social death” and in what ways is his account of slavery relevant (or not) for the discussion around incarceration in general and prison privatization in particular? Thinking about the issues of race and social control (of bodies, labor, movement, space etc.) make a substantiated argument about the mechanisms and policies that allow and account for the growth in private prisons. In your response, make sure to address the various reasons, rationales, and mechanisms that the authors on your list provide for prison privatization while making your arguments.

OR

2. Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Angela Davis and Marc Mauer have related yet somewhat distinct explanations for the rapid increase in incarceration rates. How does Patterson’s notion of Social Death figure, if at all in their arguments? How do Selman & Leighton and Useem & Peel concur or differ in their analyses? With Wilson Gilmore’s definition of racism in mind, briefly describe the approach of each writer, and how they are similar or different, highlighting the key contributions of each. Lastly, how do each of the authors view the role of popular representations of prisons and prisoners in sustaining and/or challenging the prison industrial complex and privatization?