The Biblical Studies
Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination

After a student has successfully completed biblical language courses, exegetical seminars, and fulfilled all modern language requirements, the student will begin intensive study for the Ph.D. comprehensive examination. Before embarking upon study for the comprehensive examination, however, the student should notify the Biblical Area Director that he or she is about to prepare for the comprehensive examination. The Area Director, in consultation with other members of the Biblical Faculty, will then provide the student with a study guide that outlines the scope of the examination (major reading list, minor area reading list, biblical texts).

The comprehensive examination is given over a period of three days, as outlined below. Once a student has passed the examination, the student should petition to be admitted to doctoral candidacy. If the student is admitted to candidacy, the student will begin the process of preparing a doctoral dissertation proposal.

In the event that a student fails the comprehensive examination the first time, the student will be allowed to take it a second time. Students who fail the comprehensive examination the second time will not be allowed to take it again and cannot be promoted to candidacy.

**Day One: Working with the Original Text (6 hours)**

The purpose of this part of the examination is to determine if the student has the ability to deal with the text in its original language. Since the student will not have the tools to do a full exegesis, the student will be asked to do work that is preliminary to such exegesis.

1. The student will be assigned twenty chapters from the testament in his or her major area of concentration and ten chapters from the testament in his or her minor area of concentration.
2. The chapters may come from biblical books that the student has already studied in seminar, but they need not be taken from those books.
3. The student will be given two texts, each about 10-20 verses, one from the OT, the other from the NT. The student will be asked to do the following over a period of six hours:
   - Translate the text, highlighting the different ways in which the text can be translated.
   - Parse designated words.
   - Explain designated textual variants, evaluating their worth, and highlighting their significance for interpreting the text and the history of the text.
   - Explain the structure of the text.
   - Explain the function of the text within its immediate context.
   - Summarize the meaning of the text.
Day Two: Reading List in the Student’s Major Area (8 hours)

The purpose of this part of the examination is to determine if the student has a comprehensive understanding of the major field of study. The student will be given a comprehensive reading list in his or her field of concentration in advance. The student should master the content and argument of each work so that he or she will be able to evaluate the given work critically and compare it with other works on the reading list as appropriate. The student will be asked to answer four of six questions over a period of eight hours.

Day Three: Reading List in the Student’s Minor Area (4 hours)

The purpose of this part of the examination is to determine if the student has a comprehensive understanding of two areas from his or her minor field of study. The student will be given a comprehensive reading list from the minor field of concentration in advance, from which the student will be responsible for two areas. The student should master the content and argument of each work in the two areas so that he or she will be able to evaluate the work critically and compare it with other works on the list as appropriate. The student will answer two of four questions over a period of four hours.

Admission to Candidacy

The completion of all previous requirements does not automatically guarantee admission to candidacy for the doctoral degree. Before a student is admitted to candidacy, the Biblical Area Faculty must evaluate the progress of the student and determine that the student (1) has completed all biblical course work and modern language requirements at a satisfactory level; (2) has passed the comprehensive examination; and (3) is otherwise qualified to write a doctoral dissertation in a timely manner.

To be admitted to candidacy students must (1) maintain a GPA of at least 3.3 in biblical course work, (2) pass the doctoral comprehensive examination, and (3) have manifested in course work that he or she has the research and writing skills to write and complete a doctoral dissertation.

The Biblical Area faculty will proceed in the following way in determining a student’s suitability for admission to candidacy. After the student has completed the comprehensive examination, the Biblical Area faculty will meet to review (1) the student’s performance on the comprehensive examination and (2) the student’s overall academic performance to date to determine if the student should be admitted to candidacy or terminated from the program. After a discussion of these matters, the Biblical Area Faculty will vote. To be admitted to candidacy, a student must receive a favorable majority vote.
Ph.D. Comprehensive Reading List
For Old Testament Specialists

Preliminary Remarks

There are two pitfalls to avoid in preparing for the comprehensive examination. The first is to study too much and over prepare for the examination. The second is not to study enough to prepare adequately for the examination. Accordingly, you should consult with a faculty member about what the comprehensive examination will entail and what you are expected to do.

The reading list for this examination is relatively brief, given the vast array of important scholarship you should read. This brevity implies that you should read these works carefully and critically and know them well.

We suggest that you begin reading these works early in your graduate career and note how some of them are discussed by subsequent scholars as you read within the discipline. Developing this familiarity with the books and what has been said about them will enable you to prepare for the comprehensive examination expeditiously because you will have been preparing since the day you arrived on campus. You can then move more rapidly toward work on your dissertation.

Category One
Ecclesial Documents, Classic Works, and History of Interpretation


**Category Two**

**Language and Text**


**Category Three**

**Methods**


**Category Four**  
**History of Israel and Ancient Near East, Archaeology**


Grabbe, Lester L. *Ancient Israel: What Do We Know and How Do We Know It?* London: T & T Clark, 2007.


**Category Five**  
**Theology of the Old Testament and Religion of Ancient Israel**


Ph.D. Comprehensive Reading List
For New Testament Specialists

Preliminary Remarks

Language and exegetical seminars will assist you in interpreting the New Testament, but they cannot provide you with all of the background you will need to write a doctoral dissertation or teach the New Testament. The purpose of this NT Comprehensive Reading List is to provide you with that background.

You should obtain the books on this list early in your doctoral studies so that you can read them during the period you are doing language courses and exegetical seminars. For example, when doing language courses, you will find it helpful to read through the section on the Text and Canon of the New Testament. And when doing exegetical seminars, you will find it helpful to read through the sections on Methodology in New Testament Exegesis, as well as the section on Introduction to, and Theology of, the New Testament.

Read these works critically. What problem is the author addressing? What is the author’s thesis? What is the author’s method? Does the author succeed? You should be able to compare and contrast what different authors say about the same topic.

Category one provides basic texts important for understanding the New Testament period. You should be aware of the background to these writings and be able to discuss their content and how they might be helpful for understanding the New Testament period.

Category two focuses on the History of Biblical Interpretation. You should be able to discuss the main lines of biblical interpretation from the Patristic period to the present.

Category three deals with the methods that scholars employ to interpret the New Testament. You should be able to discuss these methods in detail and be able to compare and contrast the different ways they interpret the text.

Category four deals with the Text and Canon of the New Testament. You should be aware of the history of the text, the manuscript tradition, the principles of textual criticism, and the development and growth of the canon.

Category five deals with the Introduction to and the Theology of the New Testament. You should be aware of the technical questions of authorship, dating, the literary integrity of the writings, etc. You should have an understanding of the theology of the New Testament writings and the different ways scholars have approached the task of New Testament Theology.

Reading through this list can be a daunting task, but it can also be a time of discovery. As you approach the time for the comprehensive examination, feel free to consult with members of the New Testament Faculty.
Category One
Selections from Literature Pertinent to the New Testament Period

*The Old Testament Pseudepigraphy.* 2 vols. Edited by James H. Charlesworth (Garden City: Doubleday, 1983, 1985). **Read the following texts:** Letter of Aristeas; 2 & 3 Baruch; 1, 2 & 3 Enoch; Fourth Ezra; Joseph and Asenath; Jubilees; 3 & 4 Maccabees; Sibylline Oracles; Odes of Solomon; Psalms of Solomon; Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs.

*The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition.* 2 vols. Edited by García Martínez, F. and E. J. C. Tigchelaar (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000); Also available in *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English.* By Geza Vermes (New York: The Penguin Press, 1997): **Read the following texts:** The Temple Scroll (11Q19-20); The Community Scroll (1QS) + Fragments (4Q255-264; 5Q11); The Damascus Scroll (CD) + Fragments (4Q265-273; 5Q12; 6Q15); Rule of the Community (1Q28a); Ritual Purity Laws and Initiation Laws (4Q274-279.284); Purification Ritual (Q512); Baptismal Liturgy (4Q414); The War Scroll (1QM)+ Fragments (4Q285; 4Q491-496; 4Q471; 4Q529; 11Q14); The New Jerusalem (2Q24; 4Q554-555; 5Q15; 11Q18); Vision of the Messiah (4Q246).

*Josephus in Nine Volumes.* The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927, 1928). Also available in *The Jewish War* (New York: Penguin Classic): **Read the following texts:** The Jewish War; and Against Apion.

*The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Text and English Translation.* Edited and revised by Michael W. Holmes (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999). There are also other translations.


*The Mishnah: Translated from the Hebrew with Introduction and Brief Explanatory Notes.* By Herbert Danby (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933). You may also use another appropriate translation. **Read the following texts:** Second Division: The Sabbath (1.1– 24.5); The Fusion of the Sabbath Limits (1.1–10.15); Feast of Passover (1.1–10.9); The Shekel Dues (1.1–7.8); The Feast of Tabernacles (1.1–5.8); Fourth Division: The Sanhedrin (1.1–11.6).

Category Two
The History of Biblical Interpretation


Category Three
Methodology in New Testament Exegesis


Category Four
The Text and Canon of the New Testament


Category Five
Introduction to and Theology of the New Testament


