

IDSVA SYLLABUS
Seminar VI, Part 1
Pre-Dissertation Orientation

Course Number:	902.1
Course Name:	Seminar VI, Part 1: Pre-Dissertation Orientation
Dates:	July 18 – 31, 2010
Format:	Residency: Providence R.I., on the campus of Brown Univ.
Instructor:	Professor Paul Armstrong
Credits:	2

Purpose

To prepare students for their third year of study, during which they will study for their qualifying examination and begin writing their dissertations (producing an outline in the fall and a first chapter in the spring).

Outcomes

At the end of the workshop, students should have near-final drafts of two documents to be completed and submitted to the IDSVA faculty by September 1:

a.) A 15-page research statement that explains the intellectual problem to be addressed by the dissertation and that situates the dissertation in the larger field of inquiry in which the student will demonstrate competence in the qualifying examination. This statement will guide the student's research during year three in preparation for this exam. The dissertation proposal, to be completed after the qualifying exam, will develop out of this statement in light of the third year's reading and research.

b.) A list of 25 books (or the equivalent) that will constitute the student's initial proposal for the individualized section of the qualifying examination, supplementing the core list taken from the IDSVA curriculum. This list will be further modified, with the guidance and supervision of the IDSVA faculty, during the student's reading and research during the third year.

Structure of the Seminar

The seminar will consist of two 90-minute sessions each morning of the two-week workshop (9-10:30 a.m., 10:45-12:15 p.m.). Students will then devote afternoons to individual research and study, taking advantage of the resources of the Brown University library system. An orientation to the library will be presented on the first afternoon.

Morning Group Meetings

a.) Morning Session I:

Each student will present his or her research problem for group critique at a morning session during the first week of the workshop. Two weeks before the seminar convenes, students will circulate a 5-page initial explanation of their research problem and a list of 8-10 books related to it (the beginnings of the qualifying list). **This document must be posted to the seminar web-site no later than July 1st.** During the first week of the seminar, students will give brief oral presentations outlining their projects (10 minutes), to be followed by roundtable discussion intended to point out areas in need of further explanation, justification, and exploration (30 minutes).

Students will then rethink, improve, and expand their statements and book-lists in light of this feedback and present their revised research proposals again at a morning session during the second week of the seminar. Following the same format as in the first week, students will circulate an expanded, revised statement and book-list in advance of the discussion and then explain their revisions in a 10-minute presentation that will be followed by another 30-minute critique. **These documents must be posted on the seminar web-site no later than 24 hours in advance of the meeting at which they will be discussed.** This feedback will form the basis of the final revision of the research statement and qualifying list to be presented for formal approval to the IDSPA faculty before the start of Fall Semester 2010.

b.) Morning Session II:

The second morning session each day will be devoted to seminar-format discussion of assigned readings related to the students' research projects and to central theoretical questions of shared interest.

During the first week of the seminar, these meetings will focus on essay-length readings suggested by the students that address in an exemplary way the problems their dissertations will treat or that otherwise demonstrate the significance of their program of research. The student proposing the reading will be responsible for giving an oral presentation (5-10 minutes) that identifies and explains its major arguments and that raises three or four questions for the discussion that will follow (30-40 minutes). These readings will be identified in advance of the workshop and made available electronically so that they can be read before coming to Providence. **No later than June 15, students must post on the course web-site a pdf-file of the reading they plan to present.**

During the second week the faculty director of the seminar will lead a mini-course "Word and Image," a theoretical exploration of the issue of representation in literature, the visual arts, and other media. Readings will be assigned in advance that address this issue, including excerpts from Lessing's *Laocoön*, Joseph Frank's "Spatial Form in Modern Literature," Murray Krieger on "ekphrasis," and W. J. T. Mitchell on "picture theory." **Students should complete these readings before arriving in Providence so that they can devote their out-of-class time to library research.**

Afternoon Individual Research and Occasional Lectures

Afternoons will be spent in the library, as students expand their qualifying-lists and revise their research-statements. The Director of IDSVA will also schedule individual conferences with students to advise them about the formation of their plans for the dissertation and the qualifying exam. Occasional group sessions may also be scheduled to discuss topics of common interest (for example: the mechanics of writing a dissertation, strategizing a professional career, etc.)

Middle Weekend

Although students may wish to spend the middle Saturday and Sunday working on their research proposals or recuperating on their own, excursions will also be available to the beaches of Rhode Island, the Newport mansions, and the museums of Boston.

Concluding Presentations

On the final afternoon of the seminar, students will make brief presentations to the IDSVA faculty of their plans for their third-year research and reading. A concluding session will then be devoted to evaluating the seminar and looking ahead to the third-year curriculum.

Schedule

June 15: Pdf-file of an essay-length reading for discussion during first week of seminar to be posted on course web-site.

July 1: Preliminary draft of research statements (5 pp.) and book-lists (8-10 entries) to be posted on course web-site.

Before mid-July arrival in Providence: Read these submissions and also complete the readings for the “Word and Image” seminar.

July 19: Seminar Begins (students arrive Sunday, July 18)

First Week, July 19-23:

First Morning Session (9-10:30): Discussion of Draft Statements, Book Lists
Second Morning Session (10:45-12:15): Student-Led Discussion of Readings
Afternoons: Library Research
Evenings: Reading, Writing, Relaxation

Second Week, July 26-30:

First Morning Session (9-10:30): Discussion of Revised Statements, Book Lists
Second Morning Session (10:45-12:15): “Word and Image” Seminar

Afternoons and Evenings: Library Research, etc.

July 30: Seminar Concludes

1-3 p.m.: Final Presentations of Research Plans

3:30-5 p.m.: Evaluation, Wrap-Up, and Looking Ahead

Saturday, July 31: Students depart