Instructions for the Prelim Exam

The questions that your committee has submitted for your Preliminary examination are attached. No later than five months from now, you must complete a Prelim oral exam. The purpose of the oral Prelim Exam is to discuss your written responses to your Prelim Exam. You will need to complete your written examination and distribute your answers to your committee no less than 2 weeks before your oral examination.

You may begin writing the exam immediately. The exam is considered "open notes/open book." You may use all resources at your disposal including the library, the Web, your notes, spell checkers, etc. The only thing you are not at liberty to do is discuss your answers (or questions) with anyone outside your committee.

Please consider your chair your point of reference with respect to any questions concerning the procedures and schedule for this examination. Please do not go to another graduate student for clarification. You may request clarification concerning the nature of the questions or the procedures for the examination; however, you should not share drafts of your written responses with anyone. The written product should be yours and yours alone. Prior to the submission of the examination, no one else should critique or edit either your draft or final written responses.

Each question should be addressed in a separate, coherent, narrative response but you may refer the reader of one response to a relevant section of another response. Each question should be concluded with a summary or synthesis that ties the ideas together. Responses to individual questions are expected to average around 15 to 20 pages but can vary in length. For example, one question may require 25 pages, while another can be answered in 10.

In evaluating your written responses, we'll be looking for evidence that you meet the following criteria:

- Presents literature in non-biased fashion.
- Evidence of reading primary sources.
- Response fairly represents literature base
- Review of studies presents adequate detail to draw conclusion
- Logical organization
- Follows APA guidelines for writing style as well as references
- Uses standard English properly
- Free of typos and grammatical error

The total length of the document will be determined by the content of your questions, but should be generally within 50-80 double-spaced pages in APA format. Prepare one integrated bibliography of the references for the entire examination using APA style. Reference pages do not count in the overall maximum of 80 pages for your responses.

And finally, before you hand in your work, please write a page or so about the examination as a learning, thinking, and writing exercise. The document submitted for review should include your list of questions, your responses to the questions, and your reflections on the process.

Please plan on dividing your time among researching, thinking and writing fairly equally. If you get stuck move on to another question or take a day or so away from the task. Remember that good writing comes from rewrites and rewrites and rewrites. You should expect to revise your work at least 4 or 5 times before submitting it to your committee.

Inevitably examinations create some anxiety, but as much as possible, try to view this examination process as professional milestone that will help prepare you for your dissertation research and your future career. We all wish you every success.