

Committee on the Study of Religion
Spring 2009

UPDATED LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT

At its meeting of 05/22/09, the Standing Committee voted the following changes to the language requirement.

1. That all doctoral students—in consultation with their advisors—achieve at least intermediate reading competence in two modern languages of secondary scholarship relevant to their course of study (such as French, German, Japanese), *in addition* to whatever primary source languages are required in their field. (Note that languages needed for ethnographic or other research, requiring verbal competence, are for primary scholarship and thus could not be used as one of the modern languages of secondary scholarship.)
2. That the requirement in modern languages of scholarship commonly taught and examined at Harvard University (French, German, Spanish, etc.) can be met either by achieving a grade of B+ or better in two semesters of a second-year language course (in either HDS or FAS); by receiving a grade of A- or better in the Harvard Divinity School one-semester advanced intermediate language courses in French and German; or by achieving a “high pass” on an HDS qualifying exam. Students whose first language is not English may meet the requirement with a “pass” on the language exam.
3. In the case of modern languages of scholarship for which there is not an intermediate 2-semester course at Harvard or a qualifying exam at HDS, the number of years required to achieve “intermediate reading competence” and the equivalent of “high pass” on language examinations will be determined by faculty in the relevant field. This involves an exam comparable to the HDS qualifying exam: translating a text of moderate difficulty in a one-hour exam with one dictionary, using a text of religious or historical significance or a scriptural text.
4. That the new requirement apply to all doctoral students currently in their first or second year of coursework, with the understanding that this new requirement must be met before General Examinations are taken.
5. In addition to the two languages of secondary scholarship, **Th.D. candidates** are expected to demonstrate their reading proficiency at an intermediate level in one of the classical languages (normally, Latin, Greek, or Hebrew). This requirement may be met by receiving a "Pass" on the HDS language exam or by completing an intermediate-level full-year course at HDS with a grade of "B-" or higher. These courses include 4021: Intermediate Hebrew II and 4221: Intermediate Greek II.