Qualifying Exam Relief Plan March 17, 2020

Dear Third Year Cohort,

Each day the public health crisis delivers a new set of challenges, the Alameda County "shelter in place" order being only the latest and certainly not the last.  This massive upheaval hits you at the worst possible time, as you enter into the final stages of preparing for your qualifying exams in May.  Moreover, most of you are in your first year of teaching, leaving you ill-equipped to manage a time-consuming transition to online formats that even our most experienced colleagues are struggling to implement.  The COLA strike, building for weeks, has also demanded time, energy, and attention.  With all of these compounding circumstances, you cannot reasonably be expected to complete your exam preparation and pass your exam by the end of this semester.

In this unprecedented situation, the English Department is implementing three temporary changes to the qualifying exam and its scheduling.

**1) Remote Participation:**

**Rules limiting the number of remote participants are suspended indefinitely.**

This change means that the student and any number of exam committee members can participate in the exam on Zoom.  Depending on how long the coronavirus crisis lasts, I anticipate that many exams will be entirely virtual.  I will work on developing guidelines for remote participation.

**2) Qualifying Exam Extension:**

**Students taking qualifying exams this year are expected to take their exams no later than October 1, 2020.  Summer exams are allowed, pending the availability of examiners.**

To accommodate this extension, Ken Mahru and I will work with each of you individually to establish a new date for your exam.  Barring unforeseen circumstances in the unfolding public health emergency, those who still wish to take their exam in May should be able to do so virtually.  Those who wish to postpone until early in the fall semester should understand that examiners going on sabbatical leave next year may no longer be available.

**3) Teaching Restrictions:**

**For Fall Semester 2020, students who have not yet passed their qualifying exams will be eligible to teach Reading & Composition courses.**

Please let me know of any structural or individual challenges that these changes haven't addressed.  We'll pause for breath over the spring break, and then together we'll develop a plan that works for you.  All of us are confronting enormous difficulties; the last thing you need right now is to carry the additional albatross of a looming exam deadline.

Most of all, stay well!

Steve