

Brown Bag session—Preparing for Quals.
EOL HE Program
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Overall Notes

There is some degree of memorizing to this. For me, it helped to think of it as a useful activity rather than a hoop to jump through. Every time I got annoyed or frustrated, I'd remind myself: "The PhD is the highest degree. Before they award it, I really *should* be able to converse fluently, stating the key ideas, naming the key scholars, and knowing the important history..." That attitude adjustment helped me with motivation.

Use all three of the modes of learning. Read, write, speak.

Study group—I recommend you form one, but ours had minimal success. From my perspective, it was: Good for getting different perspectives. Good for motivating myself to work as meeting-prep was a more immediate goal than exam-prep. Good to talk through things; for me, working through issues verbally, thinking of how to defend ideas and deciding what is important, was more useful than listening to others (sort of the idea that the best way to learn is to teach). We didn't do this, but thinking about it now, debates would have worked well. Think about issues from different perspectives, and if you and your study partner(s) agree, someone play devil's advocate.

Keep current. Don't get so focused on studying history and memorizing scholars' names that you neglect what is going on today. Keep reading the *Chronicle*, keep reading reports (e.g., WICHE and Lumina reports) as they are issued, and keep following the news.

Attend seminars. There may be a temptation to say that you need to focus on studying to prep, but seminars are great for expanding your knowledge base, generating ideas, experiencing academic discourse, and so forth.

Audit an extra course. If you can find a course that will cover material that will inform your background, take it—there's less pressure, you can focus on your needs, you will learn from reading and active participation, and you'll keep intellectually in shape.

General Exam

Re-read books, particularly Rudolph. Rudolph and such help with perspective; objective is not to memorize history, but just to have overall knowledge of how HE in US developed. I don't think memorizing a timeline is a reasonable objective, but you need to put what you know in context. It's also good to think about US and world history. What was happening in the world at the time HE was going through changes?

Start today—in classes, NEVER let yourself say things like "according to the first reading we had for today..." or "I can't remember where I read it, but..." Force yourself

to look at the author, know the source, state the source out load with the idea. From the beginning, connect information with the source.

Course papers are a great resource. Write good papers as you work through the program and use those to study—you've been synthesizing information and developing ideas, so that work should be your best resource.

Special Field Exam

If your ER is closely connected with your specialization, you should have already written an excellent, comprehensive lit review. Study that. I pulled out the information from that paper and reorganized it. A lit review is organized by topic; I reorganized by source, made cards, and worked at memorizing those.

I also went back to the papers I had read for the ER and other projects. I found that in many cases, I had taken the information I had been interested in at the time, but now I was finding a lot more there that I didn't remember. This was a very useful experience for both the exam and getting ready for the diss. (I'm assuming that you save copies of all the articles you use. It's also good to keep key books, or to copy key chapters of things you check out of the library. Those files, particularly for your ER/Special Field Exam/Diss., are and will be key resources.)

Probably the best thing I did was I talked the topic through with my boss (someone who knows my issue, knew my ER well, and was able to challenge my assertions and ask good questions). Basically, I answered the question in a sort of practice run. This helped me to see where I couldn't state what I wanted to say, so I knew exactly what I needed to go back to the lit for, and it helped me formulate my central thesis. Do this when you feel that you know your stuff, but when you still have time to go back and fill in the holes you identify.