New York University
Gallatin School of Individualized Study

Colloquium Workbook for Gallatin Students

Assembled by the Office of Advising
(with special thanks to Susan Cooper)

This workbook is meant to supplement preparatory information for the colloquium found on our web site at:

http://www.nyu.edu/gallatin/current/ba/colloquium.html

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Who Are You? Your Intellectual Autobiography

At the beginning of your Colloquium you will be invited to take the first 15 minutes or so to talk about yourself, your program of study and how you came to be interested in the issues you raise in your rationale. If you have not completed an Intellectual Autobiography and Plan for Concentration (IAPC), the following exercise should help you. Even if you have written an IAPC, you may want to do this exercise again. As you move towards graduation it is very important that you gain practice in describing orally what you did at Gallatin so that it makes sense to outsiders.
You might discuss some of the following:

a) How you came to be studying at Gallatin.

b) Things you learned in different settings (in Gallatin or in other parts of the university, in workshops as well as in classes, including if relevant your internships and/or professional life).

c) How you understand your studies and the themes you have chosen for your colloquium relating to your own history, your concentration, and/or your interests more generally.

Feel free to organize your essay however you like--you are not obligated to consider a) b) and c) in any particular sequence, nor should you feet compelled to cover them in an artificially exhaustive manner. Once you finish your first draft, go through and cut out personal information that doesn't tie into your life as a scholar. For instance, if your concentration is in cognition and sentience, it is right and appropriate to say something like, "Ever since I arrived in New York from Pakistan, I've been interested in how the phenomenon of diaspora shapes self-identity. " However, statements like, "I initially came to Gallatin because I didn't really know what to do" or "I chose my classes mainly because they allowed me to take internships in the real world" doesn't tell your readers anything positive about you as an intellectual.

Finding a colloquium topic, from the "inside out" and the "outside in."

There are many ways of arriving at a colloquium topic that interests you. Below, we discuss the difference between the "inside out" and "outside in" approach to finding your topic.

The "inside out" approach works well for students who either lack a cohesive concentration, or who think of themselves as more practical than theoretical. Here, students engage in thought exercises that help them recall "pivotal moments" at Gallatin: personal flashes of excitement or insight gleaned either in courses, independent studies, internships, or even extra-curricular activities. Once the pivotal moments are determined, the student assembles a book list that links personal epiphanies with universal themes and questions.

The "outside in" approach works well for students who have a relatively cohesive concentration and/or are good list-makers. In this approach, students begin with their transcript, making a list of all the classes they've attended and texts they've read during their time at Gallatin, and looking for themes that emerge from those. Another way to work "outside in" is to think of a particular class you liked and use that class's syllabus as a springboard to imagine a new class of sorts, one that expands on the parts of the older class that particularly interested you.

In this workbook, we'll show you how reach a colloquium topic using both the "outside in" and "inside out" techniques. **Even if you find yourself drawn to one approach, we recommend you attempt both**. Students are often surprised at how much they learn about themselves while doing these exercises, and we wouldn't want you to miss out on that experience.

FINDING A COLLOQUIUM TOPIC FROM THE "INSIDE OUT"

Tactic 1. Consider a problem within a theme

A *theme* is a category, often broadly construed (as, for example, democracy, race, gender, sexual identity or class) and can be applied to a number of different historical periods or areas of the world. A theme may be labeled a *problem* if it is expressed as a question. Examples of appropriate colloquium questions derived from themes include:

- What does "representation" mean, artistically and politically?
- How did rationality and scientific thought become the dominant mode of thought in Western culture?
- How have social trends been determined through history?
- What does it mean to speak of "artificial intelligence"?

Tactic 2. Find a timeless question within a specific period of interest.

Many students find themselves drawn to a particular *time* in human history, such as the Middle Ages, the post-WWII period, or the Internet age. For a colloquium, a student might want to investigate a certain *timeless question* that emanates from their study of a particular period, such as:

- How did the Industrial Revolution forever change what is meant by revolution?
- What can Internet theorists of "social networks" learn from the architects of Rome, who designed some of the first road and plumbing systems?
- What's the connection between postmodernism and a renewed interest in Greek sophists?

Tactic 3: Find a boundless question within a bounded area of interest.

A student who studies a particular *bounded area* (bounded by geography or time, e.g. pre-Columbian South America or Imperial China in the 19th century) may want to formulate a *boundless* question for their colloquium.

- What are the artistic legacies of Islam (using Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and New York)
- Eastern European arts, bureaucracy and the state
- Colonialism and the arts: India and China

Tactic 4: Expand upon a legacy.

Sometimes, a student with a narrow-sounding phenomenon (e.g., the Vietnam War, Darwin) but expands outward to look at related and contextual ideas and problems. Examples:

- Darwin's legacy: from biological to social theories of evolution
- Pulitzer and other prizes: the history of market forces and publishing
- Beyond Woodstock: mass organizing, the arts, and the future

Tactic 5: Use performance to articulate a critical question.

Many Gallatin students have taken classes that focus on theatre, dance, dramatic literature, acting/directing and other forms of *performance*. These studies lend themselves particularly well to *critical questions*. For example

- From page to stage: the rewards and challenges of adaptation
- Word made flesh: the relationship between religious texts and their performance
- What are the politics of dressing (for example, recent debates on veiling, school dress codes, etc.)

Tactic 6: Use methodology in a fresh way.

Methodology refers to the application of a specific set of rules or procedures used by members of a discipline. For example, one may speak of ethnographic method (common to anthropology), discourse analysis method (common to those who study linguistics) or hermeneutic method (common to those who study popular culture.) Additionally, one may apply theory as methodology, as in the case of psychoanalytic theory, feminist theory, queer theory, Marxist theory, etc. A methodology-driven colloquium would be one in which the student ideally applies traditional theories in a fresh way. For instance:

- Using methodologies of geography (e.g. mapping technologies) to discuss politically under-served areas through history
- Integrating economic analyses into a discussion of scientific discoveries
- Approaching the issue of women in music through feminist theories of representation, rather than "head counting"

Tactic 6: Draw global questions from personal activities and experiences

Many students begin their colloquium by beginning with an ostensibly narrow-sounding personal activity that expands into an exploration of global phenomenon. Some examples include:

- Drawing on her time studying the Brazilian martial arts form *capoeira*, a student might create a colloquium title called, "Dance: Resistance in Motion?"?
- Recalling his time interning at an NGO, a student might create a colloquium titled, "The Troubled Politics of Benevolence."
- Remembering her time as a photojournalist, a student might create a colloquium titled, "Just Be Yourself? How technology creates reality."

STUDENT EXERCISE: Priming the Pump

The following exercise is designed to help you discover how much you already know about what you might want to discuss in your colloquium and to help you overcome your fear of drafting your rationale. Choose a topic you might want to talk about--perhaps an issue you enjoyed thinking about in a Gallatin seminar. You are not obligated to adhere to the topic you use here-we are just working on what it would feet like to get started. *This exercise can serve as a point of departure for your next meeting with your advisor.*

Pretend that each of the following sentences is opening to a paragraph in a draft rationale. Copy the sentence and finish it. Then fill out each paragraph with three sentences elaborating on the first sentence. In the last sentence of each paragraph try to offer up examples of texts that support the claims you are making or that would be interesting to explore in light of your comments.

The topic I would like to discuss in my colloquium is _____

My own interest in this issue arises because _____

Several complex questions arise when considering this topic, namely._____

The most useful text/author I can think of to *begin* addressing these questions is _____

Because _____

However there are several other ways to explore this issue, as exemplified in works such as _____

While there are many approaches to this subject the approach I find most satisfying *in the end* is that of _____
Because _____

However the following issues remain to be addressed: _____

Notes

1) Free writing is a useful point of departure, but your own rationale drafts should not contain these sample sentences--by the time you have a rationale draft to submit you should have progressed well beyond this exercise.

2) You will discover right away that it is hard to say anything substantial about the issues you are interested in without referring to some major texts-so you must go back to your books immediately to draft a more thoughtful version of your rationale.

STUDENT EXERCISE: USE GOOGLE, AND KNOW THAT GOOGLE IS NOT ENOUGH!

If you are searching for possible texts to use for your colloquium, the Google search engine on the Web can provide all sort of tips, some useful and others not. One of the most effective ways to search on Google is to type in your interests, plus the word "syllabus." This should send you to all sorts of course listings, with all sorts of bibliographies.

But don't end your search at Google. Utilize that tuition you are paying by downloading full texts of copyrighted journal articles for FREE. Yes, NYU's site license allow you to access all sorts of stuff you'll never find on Google, all without leaving your house.**

Intrepid students may want to explore all the options available to them at http://library.nyu.edu/collections/find_articles.html

Other popular online databases include:

Project Muse: http://muse.jhu.edu/
Full-text online access to all journals published by the Johns Hopkins University Press. Disciplines covered are humanities, social sciences, and mathematics. Terri's notes: I find this the most user friendly of all the databases. It allows you to print from HTML or in PDF form.

J-Stor (Scholarly Journal Storage): http://www.jstor.org/
Provides image and full-text online access to back issues of selected scholarly journals in history, economics, political science, demography, mathematics and other fields of the humanities and social sciences. Terri's notes: Be sure to check both J-Stor AND Project Muse, since they tend to cover different journals in overlapping fields.

Lexis-Nexis: http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe
This is what attorneys, legislators and reporters use to research court cases, legislation, business news, and general press coverage of events. Terri's notes: for magazine coverage, be sure to also check ProQuest, below.

ProQuest: http://library.nyu.edu/collections/find_articles.html (and then click on "ProQuest" on the right-hand side of page)
Terri's notes: this is where I search for newspaper and magazine coverage on topics.

Digital Dissertations: http://wwwlib.umi.com/dissertations/gateway
This is what it sounds like. Dissertations from your home school are usually free; others are available at a cost to you. Really useful for estoteric stuff.

***Note: If you are accessing these services from home, be sure to set your Web browser proxy to NYU's server, by following the directions at http://www.nyu.edu/its/faq/connecting/proxy.html*

FINDING A COLLOQUIUM TOPIC FROM THE "OUTSIDE IN"

Tactic 1: Beginning with your transcript.

Below are some examples of colloquium topics constructed by hypothetical students with concentrations in arts & activism, writing, and science and technology.

Examples of colloquium topics drawn from concentrations in arts & activism

- Coursework in psychology, Art and Public Policy, Social Work, Gallatin arts workshops, Education classes. Possible colloquium title: "Art therapy as social rehabilitation."
- Coursework in Mathematics, Gallatin community learning classes, sociology, economics, computer science, Gallatin Arts workshops. Possible colloquium topic: "Designing 'social software' and networking and social change."
- Coursework in East Asian studies, politics, anthropology, cinema studies, comparative literature, Asian-American studies. Possible colloquium title: "The 'warrior-artist' (samurai) in fact, fiction and myth."
- Coursework in Earth sciences, fine arts, metropolitan studies, Gallatin arts workshops, Gallatin community learning classes. Possible colloquium title: "What's "green" about Green Architecture?"

Examples of colloquium titles drawn from concentrations in writing:

- Courses in political science, area studies of Russia and China, comparative literature. Possible colloquium title: "The risk of writing in authoritative regimes"
- Courses in interactive telecommunications, computer science, mathematics, Gallatin writing workshops. Possible colloquium title: "The art and science of technical writing."
- Courses in cinema studies, film and television, Spanish, Latin American studies. Possible colloquium topic: "Writing Latin American presence"
- Courses in psychology, theatre studies, comparative literature, Gallatin writing workshops. Possible colloquium title: "What makes writing funny?"

Examples of colloquium titles drawn from concentrations in science and technology:

- Courses in photography, art history, biology, education. Possible colloquium title: "Imaging the Body: From Galen to the MRI."
- Courses in psychology, women's studies, chemistry. Possible colloquium topic: "Gender, mental health and the 'medication' tradition."
- Courses in religion, archeology, English. Possible colloquium topic: "England in myth and stone."
- Courses in Asian American studies, cinema studies, interactive telecommunications, comparative literature. Possible colloquium title, "Asians as technologists: Myths and Facts."

Tactic 2: Expanding an existing syllabus:

Here is an example of how one might work from an existing syllabus. While in high school, hypothetical Gallatin student “Nancy” developed an interest in religion. In her first year at Gallatin, she signed up for the first year seminar "Pilgrimage, Sacred Places and Remarkable Outsiders." Yet while Nancy enjoyed most of the class content, she often found herself wishing her teacher would speak more about secular journeys in addition to spiritual ones. As she progressed beyond her first year, Nancy found herself drawn to courses in anthropology and globalization in addition to her initial interest in religion. Nancy has decided that she will title her colloquium, “Spiritual and Secular Journeys: the Quest for Meaning.” For her book list, Nancy draws primarily from texts read in college classes, and supplements them where necessary with new reading. *Note: underlined texts refer to books Nancy has read for classes.*

Ancient, Medieval, and Renaissance Classics (pre 1650) (7 or more texts)

Exodus and Psalms
Travel narratives of Iba Battuta and Ibn Jubayr (medieval Muslim travelers)
The Book of Margery Kempe
Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*
The Epic of Gilgamesh
Homer*, The Odyssey.*
The Son-jara.Epic

Modernity - the Humanities (post 1650) (4 or more texts)

Matsuo Basho, *The Narrow Road to the Deep North.*
John Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*
Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred & The Profane*
Travel Narratives of Richard Burton and John Burkhardt
The Autobiography Malcolm X
Mary Louise Pratt*, Imperial Eyes*

Modernity - The Social and Natural Sciences (4 or more texts)

Victor Turner*, Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*
Michael Sallnow*, Pilgrims of the Andes*
C. Bawa Yamba*, Permanent Pilgrims*
James Clifford*, Routes*

Area of Concentration (5 or more texts)

Edward Said, *Orientalism.*
Clifford and Marcus, *Writing Culture*
Paul Gilroy*, BlackAtlantic.*
Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dfimensions of Globalization*
Caren Kaplan, *Questions of Travel*

EXERCISE FOR STUDENTS: THE BOOK LIST

This is playful exercise to help students who are having a hard time settling on any theme and can't decide what books they would like to think about.

Scenario I (Desert Island): You have been marooned on a Desert Island. What five books do you wish you had with you to sustain you in your solitude? Are they the same books you would have wanted when you graduated from High School?

Scenario 2 (Fahrenheit 451): An evil empire has taken over the world and is destroying all books. What five books will you choose to memorize to save for posterity? Does it make a difference what kind of an evil empire we are dealing with?

Scenario 3 (Emergency Library): A natural disaster is sweeping the East Coast, destroying all libraries in its wake. Before it strikes you have just enough time to grab five books that will be crucial to continue the work you feet is most - important to you. Which five will you grab? Does it make a difference what kind of work you hope to accomplish?

Scenario 4 (Five Books):

- List five books that you hated reading at the time, but that in retrospect you are glad you read. Why are you glad you read them?

- List five books that changed the way you think about something that matters to you.

- List five books that improved you in some important way--practical, spiritual, physical, etc.

- List five books that gave you pleasure and that-you would enjoy rereading.

DRAFTING YOUR RATIONALE: Six Steps
by Terri Senft (terri.senft@nyu.edu)

If you are reading this, you are probably looking for guidance regarding your rationale. To help students, I've developed a "how to" sheet that combines insights from Sara Murphy and Vasu Varadhan with my own thoughts on the subject.

Below, you'll see I've broken the rationale writing process into six steps, which I offer to students with the huge caveat: you must resist the temptation to follow my steps as if using a recipe to bake a cake. There are two important reasons for this. First, every primary adviser has a different view of the rationale drafting process, and you need to confer with your own adviser before taking everything I say here to heart.

Second, even if you adviser DOES agree with my view of the rationale drafting process, you may want to change the order of the steps below, combine elements from different steps, and so forth. Rather than sequential dictates to be followed in chronological fashion, think of these steps more as "check boxes" to get you started, and to review to check for anything missing once you draft your rationale. To keep the recipe analogy, you aren't just making A cake; you are making YOUR cake. Your rationale should reflect your mode of thinking, not mine.

Now, to the steps...

1. Briefly describe your experience at Gallatin and how you formed your concentration.

    How and why did you come to be here? What is your area of concentration? What have you done (classes, indie studies, internships, creative work outside of Gallatin) in conjunction with your concentration topic? What was the most important book, film, exhibit, article, image you experienced to date? Why?

2. Articulate three questions stemming from your concentration that you plan on exploring in your colloquium.

    I suggest thinking of your rationale as if it were a pitch for a course you might teach, rather than a formal research paper with well-developed argumentation. Sara Murphy points out that just as a department has many courses it offers its students, your concentration will likewise be a big area of inquiry. What you want to do in your rationale, and latter in your colloquium is map out a *specific angle or issue* that you are focusing on *within* the concentration.

    To do this,it helps to focus your rationale around a series of interrelated questions stemming from and honing in on a specific element of your concentration. This is often the most difficult part of writing the rationale, and it helps to consult with your adviser here, since different advisers have different understandings of the colloquium's breadth. For me, "commodity culture" would be a concentration topic, "women and commodity culture" might be a colloquium topic, and one question raised in the rationale might be, "What does it mean to speak of the female consumer?" Other advisers will have different understandings of the concentration/colloquium/questions paradigm than the one I'm mapping here, though, which is why it's important to double-check with them before proceeding too far into the rationale process.

While I recommend you come up with at least three inter-related questions, you could have more, or even less than three. Here are some popular ways to articulate your questions:

A. Begin with the words "what" and/or "how." For example, if your concentration is in reception and the arts, you might ask, "What does it mean to speak of emotion in music?" If your concentration is in theories of modernism, you might ask, "How has the notion of collage figured in formalism?" In order to avoid dangerous philosophical terrain, try not to use "why" when formulating your questions.

B. Use the "here's a contradiction" approach. Sara Murphy gives this example: "Reading works in political theory and women's studies, I noticed something intriguing. While we often think of the period of the long nineteenth century as ushering in a kind of repressive series of attitudes toward women and public life, it is also the period when modern feminism takes root and makes a very large impact on social, cultural, and political life. How could I account for this apparently mysterious contradiction?"

C. Contest a black and white view of a phenomenon. Sara Murphy gives this example: "While developing my concentration in post-coloniality and its manifestations in literature and culture, I noted that one major idea scholars speak of is called "hybridity or hybridization." According to the critic Homi Bhabha, this means that there is an interpenetration between the cultures of colonized peoples and the cultures of those who are or have been colonizers. Some writers seem to celebrate this. But I have come to wonder about it. Doesn't this mean, at least in part, that formerly colonized peoples have lost their cultures of origin perhaps definitively? Could this be imperialism by other means? "

D. Try the "what are we not seeing here" approach. gain from Sara Murphy: "As I developed my concentration in literature and politics, I began to ask myself whether European novelists in the 20th century were interested in politics at all. It seemed odd: while the nineteenth century novels I read were so concerned with the events of day--Eliot, Thackeray, Balzac, for instance--the twentieth-century Western European novelists I read seemed interested only in forms and innovations in representation. Was there any political agenda, I came to wonder, in James Joyce's *Ulysses*? In Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*? Here's what I think so far…"

3. Demonstrate that you understand that the roots of your three questions can be found within ancient texts.

Vasu Varadhan argues that nearly every abstract question you can think of has its roots in ancient thought. You probably want to list about four ancient texts in your rationale that both "tell" and "show" something about your questions. For instance, you could link the colloquium question, "What makes a great speech?" to Aristotle's Rhetoric, which works by TELLING the reader what makes great speechifying. You could also link it to Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, which shows a great example of classic oratory in Marc

Anthony's "Friends, Romans, Countrymen" speech.Here are the most common ways students link ancient texts to their colloquium question:

A. Chronological precedent: In this case, the student uses an ancient text to situate the date a modern phenomenon may have in fact “begun” Examples: Using *Travels of Marco Polo* to suggest that globalization may have initiated long before modernity; using writing of Sappho trace the history of “feminine writing”.

B. Dramatic analogue: In this case, a student uses a work of theatre, poetry, fiction etc. to demonstrate explore the ancient roots of a particular psychological or sociological phenomenon. Examples: Exploring how ambition fuels the characters in *Macbeth*; demonstrating that *Antigone* struggled with the issue of family versus the state; discussing the social protests against war articulated by the women in *Lysistrata*, etc. etc.

C. Philosophical Genealogy: In this case, a student explores the ancient roots of a particular contemporary philosophical question they are considering. Examples: Comparing the treatment of simulation in Plato’s *Republic* to Baudrillard’s *Simulations*; using Kant’s writings on the sublime to theorize natural disaster reporting.

D. Philosophical Critique: In this case, a student critically assesses the political and social costs of an ancient text. Example: Luce Irigaray’s feminist critique of Plato’s Cave metaphor; Homi Bhabha’s postcolonial critique of Aristotle’s theories of mimicry and mimesis.

4. Demonstrate how your three questions are interdisciplinary in nature, spanning the humanities, the social sciences and/or the natural sciences.

The chief way you’ll be able to demonstrate a through-line between ancient texts and contemporary concerns is through a brief discussion of modernity. Although you won’t have to cover everything, you need to speak about one or two major shifts from antiquity to the present day, with regard to your subject matter. Possible topics would include the introduction of the printing press, the spread of mass media, the development of the city, the arrival of women’s suffrage and feminism, the rise of psychology and other social sciences, the social power of the novel, the rise of the bourgeois, and so forth. Again, your choice of text may be one that tells the reader about the subject (e.g. Karl Marx's notion of commodity, Freud's notion of the superego) and/or one that shows the reader (e.g. novels about the industrial revolution, plays about the inner life of the housewife, etc.) You probably want to list about four texts in your rationale.

5. Articulate the stakes of your colloquium by grounding your abstract questions in concrete, contemporary material.

There are many ways to articulate the stakes of your colloquium, or what researchers call the "so what" question. One approach is to cite stories from your life that can serve as test cases. Another approach is to discuss general trends in contemporary life. A third is to

bring in audio or visual objects to serve as touch points for discussants. In this section of the rationale, your job is to explain what you plan on doing to make your colloquium come to life.

For instance, to ground the question, "What constitutes success in art?" a student might draw on a personal experience interning for a television station that rejected a documentary on a noteworthy topic because it wasn't 'sexy' enough. Alternately, he or she might discuss the difficulty that genre-defying visual artists have breaking into today's art market. Still another approach might be to briefly replicate a classic psychology experiment where students were asked to adjudicate certain slides of art work. Imagination can be great thing in this section of the rationale, but it is important to remember that when it comes time for the colloquium, demonstrations should last only as long as necessary to make your point and no longer.

6. Don't shy away from contradictions and confusions regarding your colloquium topic.

This is the time to talk about any "wild card" texts your ntroduce to your colloquium, or any other general ideas that contradict, confuse or generally "dirty up" your clean thoughts about your colloquium topic. As Sara Murphy writes, "Don't shy away from them. Put them out there."

WRITING YOUR RATIONALE: FOUR PARTS

Part 1: Your Title

Your title should ideally entertain the reader, and let her know what is coming. When in doubt, you can always use the colon for effect, as in "When Gay White Men Sing Like Black Women: Reading Race, Sexuality and Class in Musical Performance." (This really was a colloquium title!)

Part 2: Your Hook

Traditionally, the hook is a short paragraph or even a sentence that is emblematic of the whole, draws the reader in, and/or makes her curious for more. Hooks can be sentences, such as "What does it mean to speak of the personal as political, in a time of televised confessions and reality entertainments?" A hook can also be a story from your intellectual autobiography that sums up why your colloquium topic matters so much to you.

Part 4: The Body

This is the material covered in "Six Steps to a Rationale," above.

Part 5: The Ending

Ideally, your ending indicates that you understand yourself in an ongoing investigation of your topic, and that your colloquium is only one stop along the road to life-long learning.

Who is in the conversation: Choosing a Committee

One very important way that you can be pro-active rather than passive in your Colloquium is by choosing the members of your committee carefully. Thinking about who you want to take part in your Colloquium conversation early is smart—you can show drafts of your rationale and booklist to all the members to get feedback an a sense for the kinds of questions each is likely to pursue.

Your committee must have three members. One of them will be your advisor, and if your advisor is a full-time Gallatin professor then the other two members can come from anywhere in the University, whether as faculty or as adjuncts. If your advisor is not on the Gallatin faculty then you will need to seek out one full-time Gallatin person to serve on your committee, but the third person, again, can come from anywhere in the University.

Step 1:

Take some time to think about the professors you have taken courses with. Which would you enjoy having in the room when you discuss the issues your rationale raises? Are there any you would prefer not to have on the committee? Which ones are Gallatin faculty? You may need to sit down with your advisor, a Gallatin professor, or one of the advisement team to seek help and advice in order to fill out your committee. The whole process will go more smoothly and be less intimidating if you can picture who will be in the room!

Step 2

Find out the phone numbers, office hours, and email addresses of anyone you think you would like to approach about being on your Colloquium. Make sure you have copies of your booklist and rationale that you are proud of so that you can show yourself to advantage. Then contact the professor and politely find out whether the professor would find the topic interesting and when he or she is generally available.

Step 3:

Figure out when the three people you want on the committee could conceivably all meet and propose a specific time and date (recall that the oral is 2 hours). If all three agree then you are ready to fill out a Colloquium Registration form to reserve a time slot and get the process in motion for a room to be found for your exam. Give the signed form to Kathe Anne Joseph on the 8th floor of 715 Broadway.

Peer Review Worksheet

No one writes well without feedback. Use this form to elicit comments from a peer you trust.

Reviewer: _____

Student whose rationale is under review: _____

Imagine that you are the student's advisor and that this is the first draft of his or her rationale that you have encountered. Your want your advisee to write the very best rationale possible, one that is a useful point of departure for an interesting and challenging conversation. To serve the student well the rationale must be readily understandable to all of the members of the committee. Help the student out by responding to the following questions:

A.) What parts of the rationale seem to you to be strongest? Are there ideas or observations that are particularly striking, unique, or thought provoking?

B.) What parts of the rationale don't you understand--are there terms to be clarified, connections left unmade, logical moves that don't make sense, examples needed but missing? Are there aspects of the rationale that seem obvious to you? Sections that could be cut?

C.) Based on your assessment above, what would you suggest the student do next? Are there other questions he or she should pursue? Can you suggest books that might be added or removed from the booklist? Try to be as specific as possible; feel free to mark passages on the rationale itself so long as you explain your thinking clearly in writing.

Colloquium Notebook Book Page

You are permitted to bring a notebook with your own notes to the Colloquium - some students even bring the books themselves! But it is not a good sign if a student devotes most of the Colloquium to flipping through a notebook. This page is to help you get a sense for the kinds of information you will want to make sure you have recorded in your notebook. Ideally, once you are well prepared you won't need the notebook except as moral support.

Title: _____

Author: _____

Date and language of first publication: _____

Imagine that someone on your committee has not read this book. How would you briefly characterize it (fiction or non-fiction, genre, period, audience, style)? How would you summarize it for them? What would you say the book teaches us? Are there important historical or cultural issues you think your committee member would need to know to understand the book?

Who is the author of the book speaking to? Who is he or she in dialogue with--specifically what texts, authors, individuals? How is the author's position or "argument" unusual or distinctive?

What theme or 'themes in the book do you in particular want to engage with? How would you speak back to the author if he or she were in the room? How would other authors on your list speak back to him or her?

Utopian Conversations

Most students are nervous about their upcoming Colloquium. It might help to think about what it is you are most afraid of, and then come up with some strategies to handle those problems should they arise. Voicing your fears will also make it more possible for your advisor and professors to reassure you if those fears are simply unreasonable.

But it is also important to ask yourself the more positive question, what do you yourself want the conversation to be like? What kind of a conversation would be disappointing? How can you be pro-active, rather than passive, in producing the kind of Colloquium experience you will remember fondly later?

1) What would the best conversation you could imagine be like? List five things that would be true about a really good conversation.

2) What do your thoughts above suggest about what a bad conversation would be like? Is a bad conversation necessarily a scary one? What makes a conversation disappointing or unsatisfying?

3) What are some of the ways you might influence the conversation? What specifically would you do to counter each of your fears? What specifically can you do to help the conversation live up to your own expectations?