GUIDELINES FOR PHD STUDENTS

Revised 07/16
The American Studies Program is designed as a transdisciplinary course of study, meant to prepare students for a wide variety of appointments and careers in academic, cultural, and public institutions. The following guidelines are thus intended to provide a framework for the development of coherent, individualized programs for students. They are to a large extent offered as flexible guideposts, not absolutely rigid requirements. Each student’s program is developed, and periodically revised as necessary, in consultation with the advisor, the American Studies Program Director and the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS).

**Note:** All students in the pre-dissertation phase must have ALL courses approved by the DGS—in consultation with the faculty advisor—prior to registering for each semester.

### THE FIRST YEAR

**Advising:** Upon arrival, students will meet with the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) and the Program Director to plan the first semester of coursework. A suitable advisor for each student will be chosen from the departmental faculty. Students are also encouraged to make contact with other SCA faculty who share their interests. While students should meet with their advisors prior to registration for the second semester’s courses, ultimate approval of course selection always lies with the DGS. **N.B.:** There is no expectation that the student’s initial advisor will serve in that capacity in advanced stages of the student’s work—i.e., on a dissertation committee. The relationship with the initial advisor is one of general intellectual guidance and support.

**Courses:** All entering students will register for the American Studies Seminar (an introduction to the field) in the fall semester and Strategies for Social and Cultural Analysis (an introduction to concepts and methods) in the spring semester. Students must fulfill the requirements for these courses as the minimum requisite for the MA degree, which can be awarded upon the completion of 32 credits’ worth of coursework (and fulfillment of the foreign language requirement, detailed below), 24 of which must have been taken in residence at NYU.

In addition to the introductory and methods seminars, PhD students will in the first year select four other courses from the list of those offered by the department, bearing in mind that they ultimately must fulfill the Field Requirements (outlined below). **N.B.:** All pre-exam stage PhD students must enroll for a full-time course load of 12 points, or three 4-point courses, per semester (with the exception of students with approved transfer credits). A total of 72 points is required for the PhD, at least 32 of which must be completed in residence.

**Transfer Credits:** While students entering with a MA are allowed by the Graduate School to transfer up to 32 points of prior relevant coursework, the department strongly recommends that students not transfer more than **12 points**, and it will approve a larger number only in rare circumstances. Students wishing to transfer credit should submit an official MA transcript for review by the DGS during the second semester of enrollment.
CONTINUING STUDY

Distribution Requirements: After the first year, students should continue to select courses in a fashion that will help them to fulfill the program’s Distribution Requirements, which fall roughly into two categories, the Core Requirements and the Field Requirements.

The Core Requirements are meant to ensure both the cohesiveness of the Program in light of the wide variety of interests that students bring to it, and the coherence of individual students’ courses of study. They comprise 40 to 56 of the 72 points required for the PhD, apportioned as follows:

- Three required seminars (12 points): the American Studies Seminar, Strategies for Social and Cultural Analysis; and, for PhD candidates who have completed field exams, the Dissertation Proposal Workshop
- Eleven additional courses (44 points) offered by the SCA/American Studies faculty. This roster of courses is offered on semi-regular rotation and is occasionally modified to reflect changing faculty interests and Program demands. It has in the past included the following: Technology and Nature; Urban and Suburban Studies; Genres in Popular Culture; Inter-American Studies; Globalization; Cultural Politics and Social Movements; Gender and Cultural History; The State, The Law and the Public Sphere; Feminist/Queer Theories; The Long Twentieth Century; Race and Racism in the Modern World; Migration: Ideas and Populations; Historicizing American Literature; Literary into Cultural Studies; Marxist Thought and Critical Practice; US Ethnography: History, Topics, Theory.
- An optional maximum of 16 points of registration credit for the preparation and writing of the field exams (described below)

THE SECOND YEAR and THIRD YEAR

The Research Requirement stipulates that a student must submit to the DGS for approval one substantial paper (25-35 pages) based upon original research before undertaking the field examination process. Qualifying papers should be written (and revised) during coursework. Consonant with the transdisciplinary focus of the program, papers submitted in fulfillment of the research requirement should demonstrate a high-level integration of theoretical and methodological reflection with empirical investigation. The research paper shall be submitted to the DGS no later than the end of spring semester of the second year. Students should submit the Second-Year Planning Form with their research paper.

The Field Requirements entail students’ demonstration of proficiency in two of the six major areas of scholarship designated in the list presented below. Students must complete at least 16 points of coursework (four courses) in each of their two chosen fields, which represent their official areas of specialization for the PhD, and serve as the basis for the doctoral exams (described below). The six designated fields are obviously conceived very broadly, and while the terms that follow each of the headings exemplify the types of topics that may be addressed under that field rubric, they are not meant to be exhaustive. N.B.: While students interested in studying intensively the phenomena of race and ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and/or class generally do so under the field of Identity, Citizenship, and Social Formations, it should be emphasized that these analytical categories pervade all of the six fields, and students are expected to develop critical perspectives that grant them priority. Students must submit a Field Exam Proposal Form for DGS approval before undertaking their exams.
DISTRIBUTION REQUIREMENTS CHECKLIST

Model Schedule

- American Studies Seminar
- Strategies for SCA
- Course in American Studies
- Course in American Studies
- Course in American Studies
- Course in American Studies
- Course in American Studies
- Course in American Studies
- Course in American Studies
- Course in American Studies
- Course in American Studies
- Course in American Studies
- Field Exam Preparation #1
- Field Exam 1
- Field Exam Preparation #2
- Field Exam 2
- Dissertation Proposal Workshop
- Course in American Studies*

= 72 points total

*This course might alternatively be taken during the summer, in the fall or spring of the third year, or fulfilled as a transfer credit.

Of these 11 courses:
- 4 should be related to each of the two Fields the student will be taking for their exam. (See Fields).

Please note: GSAS requires that students are enrolled every semester until degree completion. Once completing 72 points total, GSAS will automatically enroll you in maintenance matriculation and waive student fees through your 7th year of study. If entering your 8th year, you will be responsible to continue enrollment by enrolling in Maint-GA 4747 and paying all matriculation fees each semester until degree completion.
OTHER COURSES:

Independent study: Should students need individualized instruction to gain competence in some crucial aspect of their fields that cannot be obtained through regular course offerings, they may apply for approval to undertake independent study with a professor. Only one such course may be taken per year, and ordinarily not in the first semester of study. Students must submit to the DGS for approval: a detailed syllabus, including a description of the course, a schedule of meetings with the instructor, a list of proposed readings, and a specification of the writing requirements and criteria for grading. This syllabus must also include a statement of agreement signed by the instructor. Students must obtain an access code from the Graduate Program Coordinator in order to register under AMST-GA 3309-Reading in American Studies.

Internships: American Studies students are permitted to complete some of their coursework in the form of an internship at a cultural or public institution connected with the student’s scholarly interests. During the second year, the student should consult with the advisor and the DGS about placement in such an internship, which must be approved by the Program and supervised by an NYU faculty member. Students who take an internship will register under AMST-GA 3310-Research in American Studies.

THE FIELDS

Work, Economy, and Everyday Life:

Identity, Citizenship, and Social Formations:

Media, Communication, and Expressive Culture:

Science, Technology, and Society:
The study of science’s institutions and social practices. Histories of rationalism, empiricism, evolutionism. Technological utopianism and dystopianism. Social analysis of "the scientific method." From the laboratory to the drugstore. From the battlefield to the kitchen. Radical uses of technology. Cross-cultural philosophies of healthcare. The ecological crisis. Peace studies. Eugenics and urban policy. Technological modernization and information society. Technology's role in the division of labor.
Urban and Community Studies:

Social and Political Theory:

These fields are meant to encourage cross-disciplinary study, and are tailored to each student’s needs in consultation with the advisors and examiners. It is understood that student interests and goals may shift over the course of study, and that field choices may change accordingly. Students should stay in close contact with their advisors in order to fit course selections to their changing programs of study. As students consider whether a course will fit one of their two designated fields, they should think about whether the course instructor would make a suitable examiner within the chosen area of study. Each of the two field exams is administered by two faculty examiners; no more than one of the four field examiners may be from beyond SCA. It is a bad idea for students to ask faculty with whom they have had minimal contact to serve as field examiners.
THE FIELD EXAMS

How to Think About the Exams
The exams are conceived as a student initiative, rather than as a formal test set by faculty. Students are the primary actors in constructing their field lists and posing the questions they will address in the writing period. The exams are designed so that students can display their close familiarity with two major areas of scholarship.

The exam is quite distinct from a research paper. The point of a research paper is to present a discovery or an argument in a persuasive manner. By contrast, the point of the exam is for students to show that they have read and understood the literature on their field lists, and that they can discuss a broad spectrum of that literature in a fluid and coherent manner.

While students are expected to take their exams during the third year, the process of choosing and constructing fields should start much earlier. As indicated above, students are advised early on to acquire the habit of selecting courses and instructors with their two chosen fields in mind. Thus by the time they draw up their exam lists, at least half, and as many as two-thirds, of the titles in the bibliographies should be books with which they are already quite familiar. The remainder should be volumes that they need to know in order to master the field. Ideally, the exam preparation is an opportunity for students to reflect on what they already know, combined with an opportunity to catch up on prominent titles they have not yet had the time to read.

N.B.: The exam should never be seen as an opportunity to embark on a new area of scholarship.

In addition, it is expected that the dissertation topic will draw on both field lists in some way. Accordingly, reading for the exams is, in part, a preparation for the next phase of the doctoral progress and naturally feeds into the research undertaken for the writing of the dissertation proposal.

In the long run, satisfactory completion of the exams allows candidates to display their proficiency in two employable areas of scholarship—i.e., a prospective employer might assume that a graduate of the program can teach in either Urban Studies or Media Studies, to choose two examples.

Completion of exams brings ABD (“all but the dissertation”) status and, should a student choose not to continue at this point, this status affords the right to receive the M.Phil. degree from NYU.

Organization of the Exam
Candidates are asked to choose two subfields, each of which fits clearly under one of the two chosen fields. These subfields should be broadly conceived but interpreted in a finite manner. Under Media, Communication, and Expressive Culture, for example, a candidate might choose to focus on television, and would be expected to produce a polemical survey of the major literature in this subfield. The candidate would sketch out her own field map, which could be organized in various ways. She might, for instance, lay out her discussion in a tripartite fashion, focusing on industrial history, genres and representation, and audience formation and reception. Alternatively, a candidate might organize the field around some of the major schools of critical thought in television studies. She would show the connections and conflicts between these schools, and summarize the central debates that have ensued. Under Urban and Community Studies, a candidate might choose an ethnography subfield, and might divide her list among rural, urban, and suburban ethnographies. Alternatively, the candidate might choose to focus on town planning, dividing the list among historical concepts: gridiron, garden city, zoning, neighborhood unit, suburban subdivision, urban renewal, gentrification, and the regional plan.

In each and every case, a field exam must display historical depth, and an awareness of how historical patterns underpin and are reflected in changes of thought within the field.
While the intent and spirit of the exam is to be comprehensive, candidates are advised to construct a field list that is manageable. To help in gauging the scope of the lists, samples from past candidates are kept on file with the Graduate Program Coordinator for ready consultation.

The Exam Process
Students in good standing will be cleared to take their two field exams beginning in the fall semester of the third year upon submitting their Field Exam Proposal. For each exam students will be required to choose two advisors, and **three of the total four advisors for both exams must be members of the SCA faculty**. Students will be expected to show that they have completed at least 16 points of coursework corresponding to each field, as detailed above under Distribution Requirements. Qualified students will have the option of registering for 4 points of Exam Prep credit (or the equivalent of one course) to read and prepare for each of the two exams, and for another 4 points in order to write each exam, for a possible total of 16 credits of Exam Prep. To obtain permission to register for Exam Prep and/or to take a field exam, students must submit a completed proposal for the relevant field to the DGS and Graduate Program Administrator. The exam proposal consists of a bibliography of 65-80 listings, plus a brief essay (1200 words) that describes the student’s approach to the field, explaining its sectional organization and presenting an overall rationale for the selection of the readings. Examiners will discuss and help to shape the proposal. Once each examiner has signed off on the proposal, it must be submitted to the DGS before the student is authorized to take the exam. The reading period follows, and culminates in the exam administration period.

The Exam Administration Period
The exam administration period occurs three times over the Fall semester (see example schedule below). The exam writing period consists of slightly more than one full calendar week (i.e., eight days); it is preceded by the exam conference period—roughly three weeks during which the faculty advisors for the scheduled exam meet together with the exam taker to determine what issues the student is interested in addressing in the exam essay. (If it is not possible for both advisors to attend the meeting, then the student confers solely with just one exam advisor, who follows up with the second one.) Based on that conversation, the student and the advisors together draft a set of two or three questions designed to elicit substantive consideration of those issues during the exam writing process. These questions may take any number of forms, as deemed appropriate by the student and the advisors, and in keeping with the nature of the exam subfields. Once all exam takers’ proposed questions are drafted they are submitted for review by the departmental faculty as a whole, whose official approval of them (after any required revision) marks the close of the exam conference period. After the exam questions are approved, they are prepared for distribution to the exam takers, who use them as the impetus for the essays they draft during the ensuing exam writing period.

Exam takers will receive their exam question via email from the Graduate Program Administrator at 9:30am on a Monday, the first day of the exam period. Each exam essay must be at least 6,000 words long and must not exceed 9,000 words total (i.e., approximately 20-30 pages). All exam takers will submit their finished exams (as a Word Doc. or PDF), marked with a word count, by 5:00pm seven days after receiving their question. Exam essays not submitted by the designated submission day will receive an official failing grade for the doctoral exam; they will be allowed to retake the exam once more, no later than the ensuing semester, as is always the case for students who fail the field exam on the first try.

**SAMPLE FIELD EXAM SCHEDULE:**

Both field exams must be completed during two of the following exam periods:
**WRITING WEEK A:** September 19- September 26
**WRITING WEEK B:** December 5- December 12
**WRITING WEEK C:** January 16- January 23
Grading:
Finished exam essays will be copied and distributed by the Graduate Programs Administrator to the exam advisors for grading immediately after they are submitted. Grading will be completed and returned to students no later than one month after completion.

Exams are graded fail, pass, high pass, and pass with distinction. If an exam is not a solid pass, it should be considered a fail. Students must achieve a pass on all exam days in order to be considered to have passed the qualifying exams. If the student passes the exams, the Graduate Program Administrator will notify the student upon receipt of the grade, and the committee’s work is done. If the student fails the exams, the advisor should contact the student with a brief explanation of the exam results; please cc the Graduate Program Administrator on all correspondence. Once students are notified of their grades, they may meet with their exam committee to receive feedback.

Failed Field Exams:
Failure of either field will result in a grade of "I" until successfully passed. Students who fail either field are placed on probation and will only be permitted to retake the failed exam in the same field and with the same examiners. Faculty members cannot remove themselves from the process of a student retaking an exam, except with compelling justification to be determined by the chair and the DGS. Under extraordinary circumstances, a student may retake the qualifying exam in another field; these circumstances must be approved by the DGS, the student’s former examiner, and the student’s proposed new examiner.

Students who fail one or both field exams must normally retake the exam(s) within three months. A second failure in either field will result in termination from the program. If the student who failed chooses not to retake the exam, a failing grade is reported, and the student is terminated from the program. Terminated students may be awarded an MA degree if in compliance with grade-point average and course completion requirements for good standing in the MA program. An exception to the foregoing is a student who fails either field of the qualifying examination while on probation. In that case, the student cannot retake the failed portions of the exam without prior approval from the DGS, the advisor, and at least one other member of the exam committee. If the student cannot obtain the necessary approvals, s/he cannot retake the exam and will automatically be terminated from the program.
TEACHING

While teaching service is not a requirement of GSAS fellowship support, American Studies doctoral students are strongly encouraged to gain classroom experience as recitation leaders during their enrollment in the program. Students will optimally teach a total of four semesters during their time at NYU, typically in the spring of the third year, the fall and spring of the fourth year, and the fall of the fifth year. (Students opting to teach for only two semesters total will generally teach in the spring of the third year and the fall of the fifth year.) Because the grad student teaching salary for one semester amounts to roughly 1/4 of the annual MacCracken fellowship stipend, students who teach for four semesters and choose each term to put 1/4 of their MacCracken stipend into savings reserve for later withdrawal can effectively guarantee themselves an extra year of funding, beyond the stipulated duration of the MacCracken fellowship. Students who arrange for two semesters of stipend reserve can secure an extra semester of funding.

Each year, in preparation for undergraduate course planning, the DGS office will solicit teaching assignment requests from PhD students who will have completed their field exams by the semester(s) in question. STUDENTS ARE COMMITTED TO TEACH DURING THE RELEVANT SEMESTER AS SOON AS THEY SUBMIT A COMPLETED COURSE PREFERENCE FORM. Withdrawing from teaching responsibilities after an assignment has been made is a major breach of professional protocol, and any student who does so will be moved to the bottom of the teaching priority list for the remainder of his or her career in the program. The only exceptions to this policy are for health-related emergencies that will likely also affect other aspects of a student's status in the program.

Teaching assignments are made by the DGS—in consultation with the DUS and the relevant teaching faculty, as necessary—and they are not open to negotiation by the grad-student appointee. Moreover, because teaching service is meant to help grad students develop their pedagogical skills, rather than to extend their field knowledge (although it will certainly have that effect), teaching assignments are not subject to review by students’ faculty advisors. Indeed, the faculty as a whole considers all teaching service to be beneficial to grad students' professional development, regardless of whether it falls squarely within a student's official area of specialization. In keeping with this principle, priority in teaching assignments will be given to those students who indicate the greatest degree of flexibility in their applications.

Graduate students as a rule are not assigned to teach independent, stand-alone courses during the regular academic year, but every effort is made to ensure that all PhD students have at least one opportunity to teach a stand-alone summer-session course during their time in the program, typically in the summer following the third year. Details about such assignment options will be distributed by the DGS office at the relevant point each year.
THE DISSERTATION

The Dissertation Proposal Defense

Upon successful completion of both field exams, the student is ready to begin formulating the dissertation project, which begins with the preparation of the dissertation proposal in the context of the Dissertation Proposal Workshop, which must be taken for credit in the spring semester of the third year. The dissertation proposal must be completed and defended by the beginning of the fourth year—no later than the third week of the fall semester. The proposal should include a description of the project, an explanation of the research methods, a brief survey of the literature within which the project will be positioned, an outline of chapters, and a bibliography of sources. This draft proposal should be prepared in consultation with a dissertation advisor—who must be a member of the SCA faculty—and two readers, one of whom may be from outside the department. The draft will be the basis for an oral discussion—the defense—which the student will attend along with the three committee members. This colloquium will also be an opportunity to review the work the student has done in the program to date, including the field exams. After the defense, students will revise the proposal, if necessary, and submit it to the DGS office after it has been signed by the three committee members. N.B.: While no more than three faculty members are required to serve on the core dissertation committee, the dissertation defense committee must consist of five members—the core dissertation committee plus additional faculty readers, as needed. No more than two of the five defense committee members may be from outside the department.

The overall length of the proposal should be no more than 20 pages, plus a full bibliography of less than 75 and no more than 120 items. The proposal breaks down into the following sections:

1) OVERVIEW (6-7 pages): Concise summary of the entire project. The three aims of the overview are as follows:
   a. To introduce the thesis topic
   b. To explain how prior scholarship has not fully addressed the thesis topic
   c. To outline the research that will be entailed in addressing the topic in the dissertation

N.B.: Because it is a proposal for research in the future, some elements of the overview will be provisional.

2) LITERATURE SURVEY (4-5 pages): The three aims of the literature survey are as follows:
   a. To review briefly the existing literature that is relevant to the thesis topic
   b. To explain how the existing literature will be drawn upon in the dissertation
   c. To argue for the unique relevance of the proposed dissertation in light of prior scholarship

3) METHODOLOGY (3-4 pages): This section describes the methods and means by which the student will approach the dissertation topic, gather research materials, and produce his or her analysis. While it varies widely according to the nature of the project, the methodology section should give a clear picture of the techniques and tools to be deployed in the dissertation. It should also provide details of archives and other institutional resources relevant to the project wherever relevant.

4) CHAPTER BREAKDOWN (4 pages): A brief outline of the proposed chapters

5) BIBLIOGRAPHY: from 75-120 items.
Writing the Dissertation

Following approval of the proposal, the student may begin work on the dissertation, which should proceed in close consultation with the dissertation director. It is strongly recommended that students apply for outside funding to support this work; dissertation fellowship awards are often more lucrative than the funding available through NYU, and they raise the visibility of the student’s work as well as constituting resources beyond those available locally. **N.B.:** Dissertation fellowship applications are usually due in early to mid November. Generally speaking, only students who have completed all the requirements for the degree except the dissertation are eligible for dissertation fellowship support, and it is understood that holders of dissertation fellowships will complete their dissertations during the fellowship year. Thus in addition to having successfully defended their proposals, students seeking the department’s backing for dissertation fellowship competitions ideally will have written at least one chapter of the dissertation itself.

Once the dissertation has been completed and approved by the three members of the core dissertation committee, a public defense will be organized through the DGS office, which will provide the student with the details of the process. **PLEASE NOTE THAT THE GRADUATE SCHOOL REQUIRES THAT THE DOCTORATE BE COMPLETED WITHIN 10 YEARS OF INITIAL ENROLLMENT IN THE PROGRAM.**

HUMAN SUBJECT RESEARCH

Theses involving interviews, surveys, or other research on human subjects often require prior approval. Because approval can take time, you should begin the application process as early as possible. Further information is available at [http://www.nyu.edu/ucaihs/](http://www.nyu.edu/ucaihs/) or from the Office of Sponsored Programs, 212-998-2121
ACADEMIC STANDARDS

GSAS guidelines stipulate that, to be in good academic standing, students must have successfully completed 66% of the credits attempted at NYU (i.e., two of the three courses registered for in each term of a full-time schedule), maintaining a minimum GPA of 3.0 (or a grade of B) throughout the period of matriculation. The guidelines further mandate that a student may not have on record more than a total of two N (No Credit), F (Fail), or I (Incomplete) grades in order to be eligible to receive financial aid.

Students have a Time To Degree limit of 10 years from the time of matriculation into the program until degree completion. GSAS requires that students maintain continuous enrollment in their programs from the time of matriculation to graduation. To maintain active status in a degree program a student must enroll each fall and spring semester until degree completion. Once ABD (all but dissertation), students must enroll in Maintain Matriculation [MAINT-GA 47474] each semester until degree conferral. Please refer to the GSAS’s policies and procedures manual.

The department requires that students complete their field exams and defend their dissertation proposals by the third week of their fourth year in the program. Failure to do so will result in probation (also see Terms of Internal Probation below), which converts to termination at the end of the following semester.

Graduate American Studies students are not allowed to take final course grades of Incomplete, except in extenuating health-related circumstances that have been validated by the DGS, in which case they must also receive permission from the instructor to submit final coursework after the original end-of-semester deadline. A student who has received an Incomplete has until one calendar year from the beginning date for the term in which the course was taken to submit all work for the course. If the student fails to submit the work by the deadline for resolution of Incompletes, the grade converts to a permanent Fail [F], and there will be no recourse after this occurs.

By way of monitoring students’ status in and progress through the Program, the departmental faculty each semester convenes a meeting at which it reviews all matriculating students’ records. Each student will receive a letter remarking on his or her performance and progress in the program. When necessary, the DGS will request individualized meetings with students to further discuss their status. If it is discovered during the regular student review meeting that any non-departmental faculty member has unwittingly violated the department’s regulations on Incompletes and filed an inappropriate grade for an American Studies grad student, the DGS will arrange for the grade to be officially changed to either I or F, in keeping with departmental policy.

GSAS POLICIES AND PROCEDURES: