

Department of American Studies
Ph.D. Program: Expectations for Satisfactory Progress toward the Degree

The Department of American Studies expects students to make steady progress toward the completion of their degrees. This document summarizes those expectations. In addition to using the guidelines in this document, the department strongly recommends that students meet with their program advisors a minimum of once a semester to discuss their progress and plan for the next steps. Students who have not yet selected a program advisor should meet with the Director of Graduate Studies each semester.

1. Fulltime students who enter the Ph.D. program with a B.A. degree should aim to complete the majority (9 courses) of their 42 credits of coursework within seven semesters of beginning the program—with strong encouragement to finish sooner. Part time students must complete their coursework and all other candidacy requirements within the five year time limit provided by the Graduate School.
2. Fulltime students who enter the Ph.D. program with an M.A. degree should aim to complete the majority (12 courses) of their 30 credits of coursework within five semesters of beginning the program—with strong encouragement to finish sooner. Part time students must complete their coursework and all other candidacy requirements within the five year time limit provided by the Graduate School.
3. The coursework expectations outlined in points 1 and 2 above are based on the assumption that under normal circumstances students employed as fulltime graduate assistants will take at least two courses per semester. Students with fellowship support are expected to take three courses per semester during a fellowship year, under normal circumstances.
4. Incompletes. The department recognizes that circumstances sometimes arise that may cause a student to request an incomplete in a course. Coursework related to an incomplete should be finished by the end of the next semester. Students with outstanding incompletes must check in with their advisors on a regular basis regarding how those incompletes will be removed from their records. Incompletes are taken into consideration in granting summer and winter term requests to teach. Students holding incompletes prior to the acceptance of this policy may abide by the previous policy.
5. Leave of Absence. Students who are experiencing ongoing circumstances that make it difficult to complete their work (illness, family emergencies, birth of a child, etc.) should apply for a formal Leave of Absence. A formal Leave of Absence stops the Graduate School's time limit clock and may be granted for up to one year at a time.

6. Comprehensive exams. Fulltime students should complete and pass their three comprehensive examinations no later than two to three semesters after they have completed the majority of their required coursework, if not sooner.
7. Students should develop their dissertation prospectus and meet with their committees until the proposal is acceptable within one semester after completion of their last comprehensive exam.
8. Fulltime students should schedule the final oral defense of their dissertations within five semesters of when the committee accepts the proposal. Part time students should schedule the final oral defense of their dissertations within eight semesters of when the committee accepts the proposal.
9. To achieve candidacy, students must complete their Ph.D. coursework (including incompletes), pass three comprehensive examinations, and develop and successfully defend a dissertation proposal. Once a student advances to candidacy, the University gives him or her four years to complete the dissertation. The department will request extensions from the Graduate School only in unusual circumstances. Students requesting first time extensions must present a rationale and timeline for completion of remaining requirements to the DGS no later than one month before their time limit expires. Students anticipating any subsequent time extension must present a rationale and timeline for completion of remaining requirements to the faculty during the annual graduate student review, since Graduate School regulations require a faculty vote of support.
10. Each spring, students will be asked to submit requested materials for the annual review of graduate students. The review will take place during May. The faculty will use the following measures to assess progress: grades, other evidence of quality of coursework or research, adherence to the above benchmarks for satisfactory progress toward the degree, presentations of papers at conferences, satisfactory completion of comprehensive exams, assessment of incompletes and plans for finishing them, and schedule for completing the dissertation.