



**AMERICAN STUDIES
GRADUATE PROGRAM
Handbook
Fall 2025**

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Welcome

Welcome to the Graduate Program in American Studies. American Studies is the interdisciplinary study of American cultures and American identity. Our program examines issues of race, class, gender, region, and nation with a view towards understanding the forces that unite and divide Americans. As our program evolves, we seek ways to broaden perspectives on America and particularly value international perspectives on America's past, present, and future.

1.2 American Studies Graduate Program Overview

The American Studies program strives to provide world-class graduate training at the MA and Ph.D. levels for students interested in the interdisciplinary study of American culture. At universities in many nations around the world, American Studies is the rubric of choice for students seeking a broad understanding of American culture. American Studies examines those values and institutional structures that hold Americans together and, at times, divide them. How America is constituted really is the core subject of American Studies.

With a special focus on the American West, and with concentrations in American Arts, American History, American Literature, American Pluralism, and Public Humanities, the program draws on a distinguished cohort of faculty with research and teaching expertise in Anthropology, Architectural History, Art History, English, Film and Photography, Gender and Sexuality Studies, History, Native American Studies, Philosophy, Political Science, and Sociology.

The program prepares students for careers in academic research and teaching, business, journalism, cultural resource management, and museums. We also prepare students for government service, especially in the U.S. Department of State (primarily its information and cultural services), and agencies such as the National Park Service. American Studies has long been one of the primary training grounds for American Foreign Service officers as well as journalists and business leaders who are charged with making sense of the American cultural mosaic for international audiences. Additionally, the program positions graduate students to think and work in a globalized political economy, preparing them for multiple career options where depth and breadth of knowledge about American culture are essential.

1.3 Familiarity with Graduate School Policies

This handbook provides basic information about the MA and PhD programs in American Studies, along with program requirements, expectations, and procedures. Students should familiarize themselves with the information here and keep this handbook for future reference. Keep in mind, however, that questions or concerns may arise that are not covered within this handbook; students

should always speak with the director of the program if they have questions about specific policies and procedures.

The Graduate School sets a number of overarching rules, policies, and deadlines for graduate study at MSU. Departments and programs work in conjunction with the Graduate School to provide appropriate rules, policies, and deadlines for all graduate degree programs. It is the responsibility of the graduate student to maintain compliance with all rules and policies as set forth by the Graduate School and the American Studies program. For the latest deadlines, forms, and policy updates, please refer to the Graduate School's website: www.montana.edu/gradschool/. Throughout this handbook you will find helpful links to information from the Graduate School as a part of the applicable section. Again, it is the responsibility of the graduate student to stay informed about the Graduate School's policies and deadlines as well as updates to this handbook.

2.0 Degree Requirements

2.1 Master's Degree Requirements

All master's candidates are expected to be familiar with degree requirements for the Graduate School, the College of Letters and Sciences, and the American Studies Program. The minimum credit requirement for the AMST master's degree is thirty (30) credits. Only those courses listed on an approved graduate Program of Study are applicable toward graduate degree credit requirements.

2.1.1. The American Studies Master's Degree Program

The Program in American Studies offers an MA Degree that affords students the opportunity to gain deeper knowledge about the experiences and values of the people of the United States as embodied in their history, literature, art, and other forms of cultural expression. Students will develop advanced research skills through the production of an MA thesis or coursework-only option (see below).

2.1.2 Master's Degree Program Plans/Options

The American Studies MA Program offers 2 program Plans/Options for degree completion: Plan A/Thesis Option and Plan B/Coursework Option.

Plan A – Thesis Option

Students in Plan A are required to write an MA thesis as a final project. A thesis typically has a minimum of 65 pages. Students will work closely with their committee chair to develop their thesis. Other committee members should be consulted as well. Ten credits of AMST 590 are required to complete this option; these ten credits can be used to fulfill the 30-credit requirement. (Please note that beginning in fall 2025, only 9 credits of AMST 590 will be required). Plan A also requires a two-hour oral defense. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that all committee members are available for the oral defense.

Plan B – Coursework Only Option

Students in Plan B will take the required courses and, in consultation with their chair, elective courses to fulfill the 30-credit requirement. Other committee members should be consulted as well. Students will be required to prepare a Final Dossier that includes a bibliography of all books and

articles they have read over their time in the program, syllabi of all courses taken, papers written during these courses, and a 1-2 page letter from the student summarizing what they have accomplished over the previous semesters in the program. This Final Dossier will need to be provided in a digital format by the student to all committee members before the start of their final semester. Students in Plan B will also sit for a four-hour closed-book written comprehensive and a two-hour oral exam. Students will be issued an AMST computer for their written exam. Please contact the program coordinator and committee chair at least one month prior to desired written exam day. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that all committee members are available for the oral exam.

2.1.3 Credit Requirements

Both the American Studies Program and the Graduate School require a minimum of 30 credits for a MA in American Studies

2.1.4 Master's Degree Curriculum Requirements

Coursework

2.1.4.1 Required Courses

The MA degree requires a minimum of 30 credit hours. All students must take AMST 501: Methods in American Studies (3 credits) and AMST 502: Research in American Studies (3 credits). AMST 501 is generally offered in the fall semester; AMST 502 is generally offered in the spring semester. These courses have been created to serve as the core of each graduate student's program

2.1.4.2 Elective Courses

Students, in consultation with their committee chair and with the approval of the program director, are encouraged to take 500-level courses from the arts, humanities, social sciences, and sciences that will advance their scholarly interests.

In consultation with their committee chair and the approval of the program director, all Master's students may also take up to nine credits of 400-level courses. Plan A (Thesis) students may take up to four credits of Independent Study (592). Plan B (Coursework) students may take up to six credits of Independent Study (592). With the approval of the program director, internships at museums and historical societies may also count for credit.

2.1.4.3 Course Descriptions and Prerequisites

American Studies course descriptions can be found in the MSU catalog, <http://catalog.montana.edu/coursedescriptions/amst/>. "Special Topics" courses are offered each semester in many departments that may be relevant to a student's program. These courses are generally offered as a 491 or 591. Prerequisites vary from course to course, and students are

advised to read the catalog carefully and to speak with instructors and advisers about prerequisites. Graduate standing alone does not guarantee admission to a course if the prerequisites have not been met.

Descriptions for Required Courses

Subject & Course Number	Course Name	Course Description
AMST 501 (3 credits)	Methods in American Studies (Fall)	Introduction to major trends in American Studies scholarship. The course will also introduce students to the range of scholarship in the American Studies program.
AMST 502 (3 credits)	Research and Writing in American Studies (Fall, Spring)	Graduate research and advanced readings in American Studies.
AMST 590 (1-10 credits)	Master's Thesis (Fall, Spring, Summer)	Required for Plan A (Thesis) students only. 10 credits required (9 credits required beginning in fall 2025)
AMST 592 (1-4 credits)	Independent Study (Fall, Spring, Summer)	Directed research and study on an individual basis. Plan A (Thesis): Max 4 credits Plan B (Coursework): Max 6 credits
AMST 575 (1-6 credits)	Non-Thesis Paper & Project (pending curriculum approval)	Please note: this course is awaiting curriculum approval. Non-thesis paper or project dealing with a topic in the field. Topic must be mutually agreed upon by the student and his or her major advisor and graduate committee.

2.1.4.4. Program of Study

The Program of study acts as a contract between the student, the department, the college, the Graduate School, and the University. The Program of Study, jointly developed by the graduate committee and the student, defines the minimum requirements for the degree. Students will work primarily with their committee chair for advising and development of a Program of Study.

Before the committee chair has been selected, generally by the end of the first semester of a student's program, MA students will be advised by the program director. Please contact the American Studies office to make an appointment to meet with the program director.

In addition to the chair, the student's committee will consist of two faculty members selected in consultation with the committee chair and with the approval of the program director. There are policies specific to the Graduate School that pertain to graduate committees. See http://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/degreq_masters.html#degreq_masters_committee.

2.1.5. Master's Degree Comprehensive Exams and Other Assessments

Oral Comprehensive Examination

The oral exam is required of all Master's students. The oral exam is scheduled for a single two-hour block and will focus on coursework; answers given on the written exam if applicable; and the viability of thesis or final dossier projects. Students will provide a draft of their thesis (Plan A) or final dossier (Plan B) to their committee members at least fourteen (14) business days before the oral exam.

Thesis Defense

A Thesis Defense examination is required as part of the student's oral examination for MA students in the Plan A (Thesis) Degree Program. The student's approved graduate committee carries out this examination. The student should have prepared and distributed a draft of the Thesis to the committee at least fourteen (14) business days prior to date of defense. There are specific Graduate School Policies that pertain to the thesis defense:

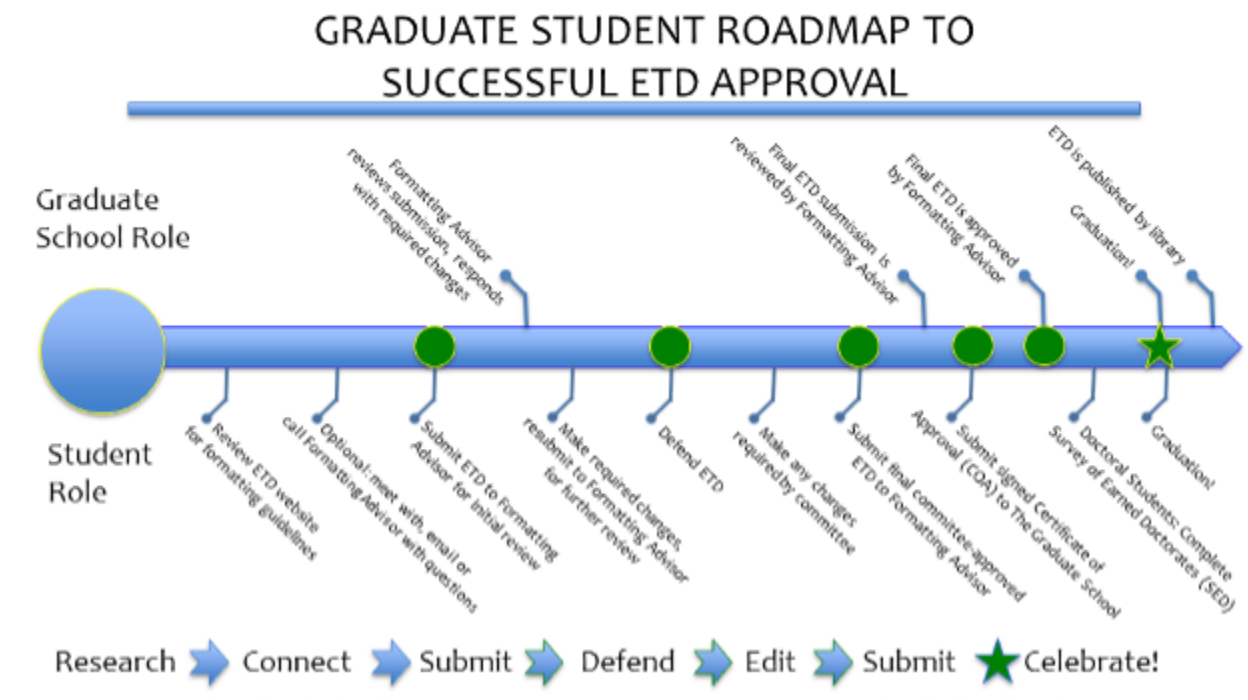
http://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/degreq_masters.html#degreq_mast_def.

Electronic Theses and Dissertation (ETD)

All theses and dissertations are submitted to the Graduate School electronically, which is why they are called ETDs (Electronic Theses and Dissertations). The Graduate School's formatting advisor must approve the student's final Thesis. Please review the Graduate School's ETD requirements and reach out to the Formatting Advisor early in the process.

See <http://www.montana.edu/wwwetd/>.

2.1.6: Sample Timeline and Curriculum by Master's Degree Program Plan



2.1.6.1 Semester Course Load to Graduate in Two Years

Plan A - Thesis

Fall Year 1	Spring Year 1
AMST 501 (3 credits)	AMST 502 (3 credits)
Elective (3 credits)	Elective (3 credits)
	Elective, Independent Study or Internship (3 credits)
<i>Finalize Committee and Committee Chair</i>	<i>Program of Study due to the Graduate School</i>

Fall Year 2	Spring Year 2
AMST 590 (3-5 credits)	AMST 590 (3-7 credits)
Independent Study or Internship (3 credits)	Optional Elective (3 credits)
Elective (3 credits)	
	<i>Oral Exam and Defense of Thesis</i>

Plan B – Coursework Only

Fall Year 1	Spring Year 1
AMST 501 (3 credits)	<i>Program of Study due to the Graduate School Beginning of the Semester</i>
Elective (3 credits)	AMST 502 (3 credits)
<i>Finalize Committee and Committee Chair</i>	Elective (3 credits)
	Elective, Independent Study, or Internship (3 credits)

Fall Year 2	Spring Year 2
	<i>Written and Oral Comprehensive Exams Beginning of the Semester</i>
Elective (3 credits)	Independent Study (3 credits)
Elective (3 credits)	Internship (3 credits) or another approved course
Independent Study or Internship (3 credits)	<i>Final Dossier due</i>

2.1.6.2. Master's Degree Completion Deadline

The age of courses at the time of graduation may not exceed six (6) years. See the Graduate School's Website for more details http://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/degreq_general.html

2.1.7 Links to Additional Resources for AMST MA Degrees**The Graduate School Resources:**

Master's degree requirements: http://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/degreq_masters.html

General degree requirements: http://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/degreq_general.html

Thesis defense:

http://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/degreq_masters.html#degreq_mast_def

Graduate Committees:

http://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/degreq_masters.html#degreq_masters_committee

Other Resources:

Electronic Theses and Dissertations: <http://www.montana.edu/wwwetd/>

AMST Course Descriptions: <http://catalog.montana.edu/coursedescriptions/amst/>

2.2 Doctoral Degree Requirements

All Doctoral candidates are expected to be familiar with degree requirements for the Graduate School, the College of Letters and Sciences, and the American Studies program. The minimum credit requirement for the American Studies' Doctoral degree is sixty (60) credits. Only those courses listed on an approved graduate Program of Study are applicable toward graduate degree credit requirements. A doctoral dissertation will typically be at least 250 typed, double-spaced pages,

2.2.1. The American Studies Doctoral Degree Program

The Doctoral (Ph.D.) degree is the most advanced degree conferred by MSU. It attests to both the general knowledge of students and their expertise in the field of American Studies. The Ph.D. is a research degree awarded to students who demonstrate not only a mastery in the discipline of American Studies but also the ability to carry out independent research and to present the results of such research in a scholarly manner.

Doctoral students are required to enter the American Studies program with a committed first-year advisor. The first-year advisor is responsible for advising the student until a committee chair has been chosen.

2.2.2 American Studies Doctoral Degree Credit Requirements

The PhD in American Studies requires a minimum of 60 credit hours. Eighteen (18) to twenty-eight (28) credits hours must be dissertation credits taken as AMST 690: Doctoral Thesis. Students are generally not eligible to register for dissertation credits until they have completed their written and oral exams at which point they become doctoral candidates.

2.2.3 American Studies Doctoral Degree Curriculum Requirements

All students must take AMST 501: Methods in American Studies (3 credits) and AMST 502: Research in American Studies (3 credits). These courses have been created to serve as the core of each graduate student's program and will be counted toward the 60-credit requirement.

The precise course requirements beyond the required courses will be determined by the committee chair in consultation with the student, other committee members, and the program director.

Doctoral students who have previously earned a master's degree must take at least twelve (12) coursework credits and eighteen (18) to twenty-eight (28) dissertation (690) credits. Up to 30 credits from a previously earned graduate degree may be counted toward the 60-credit hour requirement. The committee chair, in consultation with the program director, will determine how many credits may be used. For students who apply master's credits, an additional twelve (12) coursework credits must be taken beyond the master's degree credits.

It is recommended that students have a reading proficiency in a foreign language. Depending on the student's research, the committee chair may require such proficiency.

All students must declare a concentration and at least one supporting concentration. The concentration must be selected from the following: 1) American Arts; 2) American History; 3) American Literature; 4) American Pluralism; or 5) Public Humanities. The supporting concentration should be thematic. Options will vary and will be determined by the student and the committee members. Examples include Native American Studies, Technology and Culture, and Gender/Sexuality Studies. Exceptions or changes to the supporting field may be made in consultation with the student's committee chair and the program director.

2.2.3.2 Elective courses

Students, in consultation with their committee chair and with the approval of the program director, are encouraged to take 500-level courses from the arts, humanities, social sciences, and sciences that will advance their scholarly interests. Students may also take up to nine credits of 400-level courses, and up to nine credits of independent study (592) coursework. Internships at museums and historical societies may also count for credit.

2.2.3.3 Dissertation (690) credit requirements

A dissertation, or thesis, written by the doctoral student and based on original research is a requirement for completion of the American Studies PhD degree. Only eighteen (18) to twenty-eight (28) credits are applicable to degree requirements. To learn more, please visit: http://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/degreq_doctoral.html#degreq_doc_diss.

The final dissertation must be presented in an acceptable form, per the Graduate School, as an Electronic Thesis/Dissertation. To learn more, please visit: <http://www.montana.edu/wwwetd>.

2.2.3.4 Course descriptions and prerequisites

American Studies course descriptions can be found in the MSU catalog, <http://catalog.montana.edu/coursedescriptions/amst/>. "Special Topics" courses are offered each semester in many departments that may be relevant to a student's program. These courses are generally offered as 491 or 591. Prerequisites vary from course to course, and students are advised to read the catalog carefully and to speak with instructors and advisers about prerequisites. Graduate standing alone does not guarantee admission to a course if the prerequisites have not been met.

Descriptions for Required Courses

Subject & Course Number	Course Name	Course Description
AMST 501 (3 credits)	Methods in American Studies (Fall)	Introduction to major trends in American Studies scholarship. The course will also introduce students to the range of scholarship in the American Studies program.

AMST 502 (3 credits)	Research and Writing in American Studies (Fall, Spring)	Graduate research and advanced readings in American Studies.
AMST 592 (1-4 credits)	Independent Study (Fall, Spring, Summer)	Directed research and study on an individual basis. (Max 9 credits)
AMST 690 (1-10 credits)	Doctoral Thesis	Doctoral research and writing; 18 – 28 credits required.

2.2.3.5 Program of Study

Once the committee chair and committee members have been set, the graduate student will need to submit a “Program of Study” form to the Graduate School. This form is due within the third term of attendance of the student’s doctoral program. The form is available on the Graduate School’s website. It requires the original signatures of all committee members as well as a listing of the coursework that the committee has approved for the graduate student’s degree. Only those courses listed on an approved Graduate Program of Study are applicable toward graduate degree credit requirements.

2.2.4 American Studies Doctoral Degree Foreign Language Requirement

The Program in American Studies recommends that PhD students have reading proficiency in a foreign language. A student’s committee chair may require such proficiency depending on the student’s research topic.

2.2.5 American Studies Doctoral Degree Comprehensive Exams and/or Requirements

Written Comprehensive Exam

Students will take two written exams. The first written exam (4 hours) will address the field of American Studies and their major field. The second written exam (2 hours) will address the student’s supporting field. These exams will take generally take place over a 2-day period. They are closed book, and students will use a computer issued by the AMST Program for the written exams.

Questions will be developed by the committee chair in consultation with the program director and members of the student’s committee. The chair of the student’s committee will issue the question(s) for the major field exam; the chair may solicit questions for the major field exam from other committee members as well. The chair typically solicits the supporting field questions from the committee, but they may also contribute a question to the supporting area exam.

Oral Comprehensive Examination

The student should schedule the oral within 10 days after the written exams. The oral exam is scheduled for a 2-hour block and will focus on coursework, the student’s written exams, and a defense of the student’s dissertation prospectus. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that committee members have the dissertation prospectus at least 1 week in advance of the oral exam.

Dissertation Defense

All doctoral candidates must defend their dissertation. The defense usually consists of a public presentation and an oral examination of the candidate’s research. The candidate must have an approved Graduate Program of Study & Committee form on file with the Graduate School prior to

their defense. The candidate must be registered for a minimum of three (3) credits at MSU during the term in which the defense is held.

Students should have prepared and distributed their dissertation to the committee at least fourteen (14) business days prior to date of defense. The dissertation defense must be conducted no later than five (5) years from the term of successful completion of the comprehensive examinations. There are specific Graduate School Policies that pertain to the dissertation defense. They can be found here: http://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/degreq_doctoral.html#degreq_doc_def.

2.2.6 Timeline

2.2.6.1. Semester course load to graduate in 5 years

The semester course load to graduate in 5 years is 6 credits per semester.

Fall Year 1	Spring Year 1
AMST 501 (3 credits)	AMST 502 (3 credits)
Elective (3 credits)	Elective (3 credits)
	Elective, Independent Study or Internship (3 credits)
Fall Year 2	Spring Year 2
Elective, Independent Study or Internship (6 credits)	Elective, Independent Study or Internship (6 credits)
<i>Program of Study due to the Graduate School</i>	<i>Written and Oral Comprehensive Exams</i>
Fall Year 3	Spring Year 3
Elective, Independent Study or Internship (6 credits)	Elective, Independent Study or Internship (6 credits)
Fall Year 4	Spring Year 4
AMST 690 (6 credits)	AMST 690 (3 credits)
	Elective, Independent Study or Internship (3 credits)
Written and Oral Comprehensive Exams	
Fall Year 5	Spring Year 5
AMST 690 (6 Credits)	AMST 690 (6 Credits)
	<i>Defense of Dissertation</i>

2.2.6.2. Time limits to complete a doctoral degree

The age of courses at time of graduation may not exceed ten years. See the Graduate School Website for more details http://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/degreq_general.html

2.2.7. Link to the Graduate School Requirements for Doctoral Degrees

<http://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/degreqdoctoral.html>

3.0 Progress toward a Degree

3.1. Academic Expectations

MSU's Student Responsibilities, Academic Expectations, and Code of Conduct can be found within the Conduct Guidelines and Grievance Procedures for Students here:

https://www.montana.edu/policy/student_conduct/index.html.

3.1.1. University Academic Standing

The information contained in subsections 3.1.1.2 -3.1.1.4 are drawn directly from the Graduate School's policies regarding grades and academic standing. Please visit the main page using this link:

http://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/grades_academicstanding.html.

The information contained in subsections 3.1.1.5 and 3.1.1.6 are drawn directly from the Graduate School's policies regarding Enrollment (Registration) and Residency. Please visit the main page using this link: <http://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/enrollment.html>.

3.1.1.1. Good standing

http://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/grades_academicstanding.html#good

3.1.1.2. College probation

http://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/grades_academicstanding.html

3.1.1.3. University probation

http://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/grades_academicstanding.html#prob_susp

3.1.1.4. Suspension and dismissal

http://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/grades_academicstanding.html#prob_susp

3.1.1.5. University withdrawals

http://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/enrollment.html#univ_wd

3.1.1.6. Re-admission to graduate degree standing

http://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/enrollment.html#univ_wd

3.1.2. Departmental Assessment of Academic Performance

In consultation with the committee chair, students in the AMST graduate program will need to complete the GREAT form (Graduate Research Annual Timeline). The form is available on the Graduate School's website <https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html>.

3.1.2.1. Academic program implications given University academic standing

If a graduate student's GPA falls below 3.00, they will be unable to serve as a GTA or a GRA. They may be placed on probation or suspended from the American Studies degree program.

3.1.2.2. Departmental guidelines for tracking unsatisfactory academic progress

If the Program deems a student's academic progress to be unsatisfactory, the student shall be notified in writing of the Program's evaluation. The student may appeal this evaluation in writing to the American Studies department within two (2) weeks of receiving the notification.

3.2. Annual Review of Academic Progress

Each academic year, the student will be notified as to whether their academic meets, falls below, or does not meet Program expectations.

3.3. Professional Conduct Expectations and Assessment Criteria

3.3.1. Professional and ethical behavior

Research Compliance <http://www.montana.edu/orc/>

3.3.2. Academic dishonesty

<http://www.montana.edu/facultyexcellence/Papers/cheating.html>

3.3.3. Disciplinary action & dismissal policy

http://www.montana.edu/policy/student_conduct/

3.3.4. Student academic grievance and appeal process

http://www.montana.edu/policy/student_conduct/

4.0 Advising and Committee Formation

4.1 Formation of a Graduate Committee

Your graduate committee is the key to your success and must be formed in consultation with your committee chair and the program director.

As stipulated by the Graduate School, committees must consist of at least four (4) members for doctoral candidates, and at least three (3) members for master's candidates. The chair must have a PhD and be a tenure-track or tenured professor at Montana State University. The committee must have a majority of tenure-track or tenured faculty members from MSU. Committee members not holding faculty status at MSU must submit documentation of their qualifications, including a curriculum vita and a letter or recommendation for the department head. Non-tenure track individuals may not hold positions as committee chairs, but they may be selected a co-chairs of the committee.

In selecting a committee chair, graduate students will want to take into account some of the following: a faculty member's intellectual interests and expertise, the relevance of a faculty member's expertise to the student's research and interests, courses taken with a faculty member, faculty member availability, and the student's working relationship with the faculty member. The Graduate School policies require the student to have a committee chair by *the third semester* in the Doctoral program and by the first semester of the Master's program. Existing commitments may

preclude some faculty members from agreeing to serve on a committee or as chair. Additional committee members are then selected after discussion between the student and their committee chair. Students may decide to have co-chairs in cases where a faculty retiree or leaves the university to assume responsibilities elsewhere. In the event of co-chairs, it is incumbent on the co-chairs and student to determine which chair has primary responsibility for guiding the student.

The chair of the graduate student's committee has two primary responsibilities: 1) to guide the student through the student's coursework, research, and writing; and 2) to preside over the student's written and oral exams and defense (if applicable). Other committee members must also be consulted about the exams and are required to attend the oral exam and the defense. They are also responsible, along with the chair, for approving the prospectus and the dissertation, and recommending degree conferral.

Graduate students work primarily with their chair to develop clear expectations, processes, and deadlines for the exams and final projects (professional paper, thesis, or dissertation). However, the student must also keep their full committee informed about the progress towards the degree.

The remaining members of a graduate committee primarily serve as readers of the final project and exams. However, they may also take on a much more active role. They are strongly encouraged to provide written comments on dissertation drafts. It is also recommended that the student arrange a meeting with their entire committee at least once a semester.

Doctoral committees and students may elect to add a graduate representative to the student's graduate committee. See Optional Graduate Representative (http://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/degreq_doctoral.html#grad_rep).

4.2 Selection and Role of Advisor

4.2.1 PhD

Doctoral students are required to enter the American Studies program with a committed first-year advisor. This process is now part of the application process. The first-year advisor is responsible for advising the student until a committee chair has been chosen.

4.2.2 MA

Master's students will initially be advised by the Program Director, who will assist them in selecting an advisor and committee chair. Once a committee is selected, the committee chair typically performs the duties of advisor for the student.

4.3 Developing a Program of Study with Chair and Committee

Students work with their entire committee to develop their Program of Study and confirm the participation of committee members. The Program of Study outlines the coursework that the student plans to complete in order to gain the necessary credits for their degree. Working with their committee, students select courses that are specific to their individual interests for their American Studies' degree, concentration, and supporting concentration.

5.0 Comprehensive and Qualifying Exams

5.1 Purpose of Comprehensive & Qualifying Exams

The purpose of the written exams is to assess the student's general knowledge of American Studies as well as the student's expertise in the student's chosen areas of concentration. The purpose of the oral exam is to examine in greater depth student responses to the written exam questions as well as to assess the students' general knowledge of American Studies. The oral exam assesses the viability of the student's dissertation, thesis, or professional paper project.

5.2 Structure/Format of Written and Oral Exams

Students must be enrolled when taking any comprehensive or qualifying exam.

5.2.1 Written Exams

5.2.1.1 Doctoral Students

Questions will be developed by the committee chair in consultation with the program director and members of the student's committee. The chair of the student's committee will issue the question(s) for the major field exam; the chair may solicit questions for the major field exam from other committee members as well. The chair generally solicits the supporting field questions from the committee. The chair may also contribute a question to the supporting area exam.

Students will take 2 written exams. The first exam (4 hours) addresses the field of American Studies and their major field. The second exam (2-hour) addresses the supporting field. These exams will take generally take place over a 2-day period. They are closed book, and students will use a computer issued by the AMST Program for the written exams.

In advance of the exams, students develop a reading list in conjunction with their committee and are also encouraged to ask their committees members if there are particular themes, issues, or topics on which they would like the student to focus. The final reading list is determined and approved by the committee chair. It will generally consist of a common list of 25 or so texts selected by the American Studies Program and another 75 or so texts selected by the chair and committee members in consultation with the student.

Some faculty members write broad, synthetic questions. Others give several, shorter questions. Some may give students a choice of several questions. Again, it is up to the committee chair(s), the committee, and the student to clarify what is expected of the student. Students must be finished with their coursework requirements no later than the semester in which they take their oral exams.

5.2.1.2 Master's Students

Master's students are not required to take a written exam to complete the degree.

5.2.2 Oral Comprehensive Exams

5.2.2.1. Doctoral Students

The student should schedule the oral exam no more than ten days after the written exams. The oral exam is scheduled for a 2-hour block and will focus on coursework, the student's written exams,

and a defense of the student's dissertation prospectus. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that their committee has the dissertation prospectus at least 1 week in advance of the oral exam. The student will need to work with the committee to see what the members will require.

The first hour of the oral exam will be a follow-up to the answers given on the written exams. Any committee member may pose additional questions about the written exams or other materials covered by the students reading and course work.

5.2.2.2 Master's Students

Master's Students are not required to take an oral exam to complete their degree.

5.2.3 Dissertation Prospectus

This requirement is for Doctoral students only.

In consultation with the committee chair, the student will prepare a 20-25 page prospectus for the students' dissertation that explains its significance, outlines the student's plan of work, and positions the dissertation in the context of existing scholarship.

5.3 Scheduling the Exams

It is the student's responsibility to contact all committee members to determine the dates and times of the exams. The Program will arrange rooms and technology support where needed as determined by the chair and program director.

5.4. Exam Evaluation and Student Notification Process

Once the student has taken the written exams, all committee members will be given a PDF of the questions and the exam responses. The committee will evaluate the exam on a pass/fail basis, and the result will be determined by a majority vote. Students may not take the oral exam unless they have passed the written exams.

The results of the written exam will be reported in written form to the student, the Program Director, and the Graduate School within 10 business days after the exam is held.

The oral examination is evaluated by the committee on a pass/fail basis, and the results are determined by a majority vote. The results of the oral exam will be reported in written form to the student, Program Director, and the Graduate School.

5.5 Path Forward Based on Exam Results

Students who pass both the written and oral examinations are advanced to candidacy for the doctoral degree. Students who do not pass their exams have options to retake their exams per the Graduate School's policies, which can be found here:

- PhD: http://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/degreq_doctoral.html#degreq_doc_comp.

6.0 Thesis and Dissertation Defense

6.1. Structure of the Defense

6.1.1 Doctoral Defense

The Program in American Studies requires a 2-hour defense of the student's doctoral dissertation. The first half hour of the defense is open to the public; the rest of the time is restricted to the candidate and committee members. The exact format of the exam is left to the committee chair but generally entails a 15-20 minute presentation of the dissertation by the candidate followed by questions from the public. The second part of the defense is determined by the committee chair and committee members and is intended to provide the student with critical feedback about revisions necessary for completing the dissertation.

This defense requires careful preparation by the student and coordination with the student's committee chair and other committee members. It is the student's responsibility to schedule the defense with committee members and the program's administrative assistant. It is imperative that the student understand the Graduate School's deadlines for scheduling the defense and for filing the dissertation. These are two separate processes. Passing the defense is no guarantee that the dissertation can be filed and accepted by the Graduate School in the same semester.

6.2. Scheduling of the Defense

It is the student's responsibility to work with committee members to schedule the defense. The Program will arrange a room and technology support as deemed appropriate by the chair and Program Director.

7.0 Other Departmental / Work-Related Policies

8.0 Funding & Financial Information

The Program Coordinator will issue a call for applications for Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA) and Graduate Research Assistantship (GRA) positions when available. Applications will be reviewed by the American Studies Advisory Committee. Graduate Research Assistantships are often the result of grants written by faculty. These may or may not open to all students in the program. Both GTA and GRA positions are competitive.

8.1. Eligibility for GTA / GRA Positions Support

Graduate students who wish to be considered for a GTA or GRA position, when they become available, must be in good academic standing with a GPA of at least 3.00. The Graduate School's various policies regarding Graduate Appointments can be found here:

<http://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/appointments.html>.

8.2. GTA and GRA Responsibilities and Union Bargaining Agreement

Responsibilities for appointments depend on the course or research and the instructor or faculty member that the student is assisting. Typically, the GTA is responsible for providing instruction for recitation sections of a course, attending the main course meeting, grading assignments, and holding the required number of office hours. For a GRA position, the student is assigned to a faculty member for a given semester to assist that faculty member with the faculty member's research.

All GTAs and GRAs must be a member of the Graduate Employee Organization (GEO) bargaining unit. The current bargaining agreement can be found here: <http://mus.edu/hr/cba/collbarg.asp>.

8.3. GTA Tuition Waiver Policy and Waiver Limits.

Graduate students with teaching or research appointments receive tuition waivers for a certain number of course credits, depending on the number of hours they work for their appointment. Graduate students should not be working over an average of nineteen (19) hours per week. The Graduate School policies for tuition waivers can be found here: http://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/appointments.html#appointments_waiver.

8.4. GTA and/or GRA Evaluation

GTAs and GRAs are evaluated on their performance at the end of each semester by their supervisory instructor or faculty member that the appointment was under.

9. Links to resources

<http://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/>