

## PhD Student Resources

<http://www.american.edu/cas/anthropology/resources/phd.cfm>

This page is designed to inform students about department, graduate school and university policies, procedures, requirements and regulations that are in place to earn a graduate degree at American University.

NOTE:

**It is the student's responsibility** to see that her/his file is complete and up-to-date at any given time; current students' files are kept in the main Anthropology office and may be accessed by asking the administrative assistant to get the file. If a student has difficulty getting a faculty member to process a form or complete an evaluation, see the Graduate Program director or the department Chair.

**Students must:**

- note schedules and deadlines for exams, stages of thesis preparation, etc.
- secure appropriate forms and submit them in a timely fashion to the correct University office
- make appropriate payments to the university upon completion of a stage of graduate work

**It is the advisor's responsibility** to be accessible to students and advise them well. Where needed, advisors must fill out and process forms promptly and accurately.

**It is the faculty's responsibility** to evaluate student work promptly and thoroughly, to make themselves accessible to students, and to provide frequent feedback and advice to students.

**It is the Chair of the Graduate Program's responsibility** to ensure that regulations are followed and, together with the Graduate Studies Committee, evaluate exceptional cases and recommend decisions to the Anthropology Council. Final graduate clearance is overseen by the grad program director.

**It is the comprehensive examination coordinator's** responsibility to arrange for comps exams to be written and taken as scheduled, by students who have registered themselves in a timely fashion. The comps coordinator also reports comps grades back to students and to the registrar.

**FILES AND FORMS** are kept in the main Anthropology office and in the Sociology mailboxes on the right side. Students must maintain their own files that are kept, alphabetically, in the filing cabinet marked "Graduate Files A – Z". The department **MUST** have copies of EVERYTHING for your file or you risk problems and hang-ups later on.

All department, grad school and university forms needed to record progress through the graduate program/s are available in the filing cabinet under FORMS or in the first column of mailboxes to the left of the main entrance to the main office.

## "FULL-TIME" and "PART-TIME" ENROLLMENT in the GRADUATE PROGRAMS

As a matriculating student in either the MA or PhD program, you must maintain your matriculation by registering for at least one credit hour every spring and fall semester through graduation. You must apply for a leave of absence if you do not enroll in any courses during a given semester.

A course load of nine credit hours is considered "full-time". Full-time study is required for international students and students with financial aid awards, and usually for students with loans. In order to maintain "full-time" status during periods of study for comprehensive exams or while doing research, writing, etc., you may fill out an "*In Lieu of*" form, having it signed by your advisor, and submitting it to the registrar. Be sure to file a copy of this form in your personal file.

## ADVISORS

Students are assigned a faculty advisor upon admission. These assignments are considered "best matches" based on admissions material, but students may change advisors as their interests develop. If a faculty member is going on leave, it is her/his responsibility to work with each advisee to arrange for another faculty member to serve as advisor during the absence.

Advisors can provide information regarding internships, career development, courses outside the department (in the University and Consortium), field schools, conferences, grant applications, selection of committees for comprehensive exams, NTOs and thesis/dissertation. Be sure to maintain a close relationship with your advisor!

### **Students' advice about advisors!!!**

To ensure good relations with your advisor, be persistent and clear about communications. Come to your advisor with plans and options. Sometimes pertinent information can be obtained from the department administrative assistant, departmental committee chairs and more senior students.

If you experience communication problems, talk to more senior students, to the Chair of the Graduate Studies Committee, the department chair, or identify a professor you can talk to.

## PhD IN ANTHROPOLOGY

### ***REQUIREMENTS FOR GENERAL PhD in ANTHROPOLOGY:***

At least 72 semester hours of approved graduate work must be completed with an earned cumulative GPA of 3.00 or higher. Students entering the program with an MA degree in anthropology are normally granted 30 semester hours of transfer credit, but no more than 15 transferred credits will be accepted for non-anthropology courses, approved on a course-by-course basis. Two tools of research, four comprehensive examinations, and the completed doctoral dissertation complete requirements.

#### Required Courses:

Anth. 631 Foundations of Cultural and Social Anthropology (3 credits)

Anth. 632 Contemporary Theory: Culture, Power, History (3 credits)

Anth. 634 Foundations of Archaeology (3)

Anth. 637 Discourse, Narrative and Text (3)

Anth. 799 Doctoral Dissertation Seminar (minimally 6, and usually no more than 12, credits), taken during proposal, research, and write-up. (Note: students entering the PhD program with a BA and needing a total of 72 credits may take up to 24 credits of Anth 799.)

Remaining course work selected in consultation with faculty advisor.

#### Distribution of course credits:

- No more than 6 credits may be taken in other schools and departments at American U.
- Courses taken through the D.C. Consortium of Universities are encouraged when comparable courses are not available at American University, but no more than 6 credits may be taken as Consortium courses.

### **Requirements for Concentration in Race, Gender, and Social Justice**

This advanced concentration pre-requires a 30 hour MA in Anthropology or an affiliated field. Thirty-six hours of additional coursework, plus at six and no more than 12 hours of Dissertation Seminar credits, with an earned cumulative GPA of 3.00 or higher, plus two tools of research, four comprehensive examinations, and the doctoral dissertation are also required.

#### Required Courses:

Anth. 632 Contemporary Theory: Culture, Power, and History (3 credits)

Anth. 635 Race, Gender and Social Justice

12 additional credits of anthropology-based course work in Race, Gender and Social Justice studies, chosen in consultation with the student's advisor.

15 additional credits in at least two cooperating teaching units, including Justice, Law & Society, History, School of International Service, Sociology.

3 credits of internship or other practical experience in Race, Gender and Social Justice.

6 credits (minimum) of Anth 799, Doctoral Dissertation Seminar, including a 3-credit capstone seminar in Race, Gender and Social Justice, taken during proposal, research, and write-up.

#### Schedule of Completion of Degree: Extension of Candidacy

PhD students (part-time or full-time) entering the program with an MA degree have five years to complete degree requirements; they have seven years if they enter with only the BA/BS degree. Students may petition to have up to two additional years to complete degree requirements if all requirements have not been satisfied within the indicated time period. Extensions are given in one year increments.

The process begins with the student submitting a memo to his/her advisor, requesting a one-year extension of candidacy. The memo should specify the degree requirements already completed, the requirements remaining to be satisfied, and the work to be undertaken during the additional requested year.

The advisor brings the petition to the Graduate Committee which reviews it and indicates support on a Graduate Academic Action form which must accompany the petition as it goes forward. The department chair reviews and endorses the petition. Then the documentation goes forward to the CAS Dean's office for review.

Extensions of candidacy are not awarded in all cases. The petition should be prepared thoughtfully and in sufficient detail to justify an additional year of study. Refer questions (or drafts of the petition) to your advisor, the Grad Studies committee, or the department chair.

**REMEMBER:** Students must be enrolled for at least one credit hour in university fall and spring semesters during the entire time of their matriculation, or they must apply in writing for a leave of absence, semester by semester.

## **PhD LEVEL COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS**

Four comprehensive exams are required of the PhD candidate, the last of which is the defense of the dissertation proposal.

#### PhD Candidates

Comp 1 ANTH 006 (Anthropological Foundations)

Comp 2 ANTH 016 (Ethnographic Theory) OR ANTH 017 (Archaeological Theory)

Comp 3 ANTH 020 Subfield of Specialization

Comp 4 ANTH 021 Defense of Dissertation Proposal

#### RGSJ (Race, Gender, social Justice) PhD Candidates

Comp 1 ANTH 009 RGSJ Foundations

Comp 2 ANTH 019 RGSJ Theory

Comp 3 ANTH 020 Subfield of Specialization

Comp 4 ANTH 021 Defense of Dissertation Proposal

### **(1) General PhD Program**

**FIRST COMP:** Anthropological Method and Theory (Anth 006)

The final exam or end-of-course project in three foundation courses (631: Cultural /Social Anthropology, 634: Archaeology, and 637: Discourse, Narrative and Text) satisfies the first doctoral comprehensive requirement. Each course instructor evaluates the final exam/project for comps purposes; the student's advisor will also review the exam/project if an additional

evaluation is required. Students must earn a score of Satisfactory or Distinction on at least two of the three exams/projects, to earn a Satisfactory or Distinction on the first comp as a whole. Once the student has completed three foundation courses with at least two "satisfactory" comps scores, the student files an "*Application to Take Comprehensive Exam*" form and pays \$25 to the Office of Student Accounts. The faculty member serving as Comprehensive Exam Coordinator completes the "*Comprehensive Completion Form*" and places a signed copy of it in the student's file. Students should check that this form IS in their file.

Some students enter the PhD program with a previously-earned MA in Anthropology and strong evidence of a three-field background in anthropology. These students may be recommended by the anthropology graduate committee (at the time of admission), or by the in-coming student's advisor (during advisement for the first academic semester), to waive the first comp exam and bypass enrollment in the foundation courses. In these cases, the first comp exam is substituted with a public university presentation re: the student's MA thesis or project, or a presentation at a professional meeting attended by the faculty, or a publication in a professional journal, etc. Such students must still file and "*Application to Take Comprehensive Exam*" form and pay \$25 to the Office of Student Accounts. The student's advisor must notify the Comprehensive Exam Coordinator about the waiver, and the Comps Coordinator completes the "*Comprehensive Completion Form*" and places a signed copy in the student's file. Again, students should check that this form IS in their file.

**SECOND COMP:** Ethnographic or Archaeological Foundations (Anth 016 or 017)

The second comp is administered as a take-home written exam, offered in mid-January (the week before spring semester classes begin), in late May (the week before Memorial Day), and (with sufficient evidence of demand) in late August (the week before fall classes begin) of each academic year; full-time students generally take it in January or May of the second year.

It is the student's responsibility to register to take this exam by filling out the "*Registration of Intent*" form with the Comprehensive Exam Coordinator (not your advisor) by Nov. 15th (for the January exam) or by April 1st (for the May exam), or to discuss the option of an August exam with the comps coordinator by May 1st. Students must also register with the university that they are taking the comprehensive exam by completing the "*Application for Comprehensive Examinations*" and paying a \$25 fee at the Office of Students Accounts.

The second PhD comp exam covers, but is not restricted to, material presented in major courses as well as items on a bibliography, which the student prepares. Questions on this exam ask students to survey current perspectives and approaches in Ethnography, Archaeology, or Race, Gender and Social Justice studies, locating contemporary issues within the history of theory of the field. Students generally answer two questions, 8-10 double-spaced pages each.

The exam will be evaluated by two readers (ordinarily the student's academic advisor and one other member of the anthropology faculty) who together assign a grade of Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory or Distinction to your performance on each part of the exam. If there is disagreement between the two readers, a third reader will be appointed as tiebreaker. Students must receive a grade of Satisfactory or Distinction on the exam as a whole.

Once the student passes the 2nd comp, the comps coordinator fills out the "*Comprehensive Completion Form*" and places a signed copy of it in the student's file. Students should check that this form IS in their file after they know the results of their exam.

**THIRD COMP:** Subfield of Specialization (Anth 020)

The third doctoral comprehensive exam focuses on current issues and central debates that surround the student's research area and that provide theoretical and substantive context for your research. The content of the exam is based on a bibliography compiled by each student and approved by her or his advisor at least one month before the exam is taken. In agreement with each student's advisor, the third comp is usually fulfilled by one of the three options:

a. a. A take-home written essay that reviews the literature and scholarship within and outside anthropology relevant to research interests.

This exam should synthesize a clearly defined segment of the anthropological literature to assist you in constructing a research problem for your dissertation. The review should problematize the literature you discuss; it should look for contradictions, debates, and different points of view, with the goal of discovering an issue, the resolution of which will address an outstanding question in the discipline of anthropology. This literature review should not simply summarize the

literature, but should synthesize a multiple works, with an eye toward understanding what is not known as well as what is known.

The exam should have a clear and well defined focus. The problem should be clearly stated and all important terms clearly defined. Do not choose a topic that is too broad or that simply considers literature that has already been well-studied. Identify a focus that will lead you toward the kind of research question that can be researched as a doctoral project.

The exam should identify a set of literature relevant to your interests, accurately render the arguments presented in the literature chosen, and clarify the underlying assumptions of the literature discussed. It should present relevant and convincing evidence to support the points made.

The exam should show clearly that you have understood the literature; it should also illustrate the understanding of its importance to you. Thus, the exam should be written primarily in ordinary English, without excessive jargon or excessive reliance on direct quotations. Quotations should be used to support arguments, rather than to substitute for them.

You should attend to writing as well as content. Writing should be clear, effective, and show accurate use of technical terminology. Citations should be complete; when citing specific points, page numbers should be included. The bibliography should include all in-text citations. Students should proofread the exam carefully, paying close attention to homonyms, grammar and punctuation.

The exam essay should be around 20 pages long, double-spaced, plus a bibliography. The literature review will not be graded during the period May 15 - August 31. Two readers, including the advisor, will normally grade the take-home exams, but a third reader will be employed if a tie-breaker is needed.

b. An oral exam based on material that covers the student's research specialization. Candidates may not use notes but may have a copy of her or his bibliography with them. The advisor will appoint two additional examiners to make up a committee of three faculty, to conduct the oral exam.

c. A take-home written exam based on material that covers the student's research specialization, composed in a one-week period. Each student chooses a question from a set of questions developed by faculty and addresses it in a double-spaced 20-page essay. Two readers, including the advisor, will normally grade the take-home exams, but a third reader will be employed if a tie-breaker is needed.

***FOURTH COMP:*** Defense of Dissertation Proposal (Anth 021)

The fourth comprehensive exam is an oral defense of the dissertation proposal. The student schedules the exam in conjunction with her/his dissertation committee.

**(2) RGSJ Concentration**

***FIRST COMP:*** Policy for graduate students in the RGSJ PhD Concentration

For students who enter the program without an MA in anthropology (i.e., either an MA in another field or a BA), there are 3 options:

- 1) The same first comprehensive as the regular Ph.D - i.e., take the three foundation courses and use the final exams/projects to satisfy the first comp requirement.
- 2) Submit a written paper that illustrates the student's understandings of anthropological method and theory as appropriate to the student's interests in RGSJ studies. This paper should be a synthesis paper that gives emphasis to its RGSJ themes. It should be approximately 30 pages in length, double-spaced, exclusive of bibliography, tables, and illustrations.
- 3) Submit two term papers from courses taken during the first year in residence. These papers should give emphasis to their RGSJ themes.

The student should discuss with her/his advisor which of these options is most appropriate before registering for first semester classes. If Option 1 is chosen, this will be graded and processed in the same fashion as for students in the regular PhD program. For options 2 and 3, the paper(s) will be reviewed by two members of the anthropology faculty; one of these readers will ordinarily be the student's advisor.

For students who enter the program with an MA in anthropology and strong evidence of a three-field background in anthropology, they are encouraged to follow the same procedures as those who enter the PhD in anthropology. That is, these students may be recommended by the anthropology graduate committee (at the time of admission), or by the incoming student's advisor (during advisement for the first academic semester), to waive the first comp exam and bypass enrollment in the foundation courses. In these cases, the first comp exam is substituted with a public university presentation re: the student's MA thesis or project, or a presentation at a professional meeting attended by the faculty, or a publication in a professional journal, etc. Relevance to RGSJ themes should be emphasized.

These students may also choose one of the three options open to students entering without an MA in anthropology, but they should recognize that this may slow their progress toward their doctorate.

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Note that passage of each comprehensive exam (for MA or PhD) requires completion of the "*Comprehensive Completion Form*". Students must pay a \$25 fee at the Office of Students Accounts for each completed examination.

NOTE, in conclusion:

\*\*\*When preparing your comprehensive bibliography for the third exam, first give it to your advisor. Once his/her advice is incorporated, get advice from other faculty.

\*\*\*Oral exams begin with the student's brief introductory statement after which the committee asks questions, altogether lasting about 1.5 hours. Exam results are made known the same day.

\*\*\*Generally, oral examinations will not be scheduled between June 1st - August 31st.

## **PHD TOOLS OF RESEARCH**

University regulations require that doctoral students demonstrate proficiency in two different tools of research. Generally these are two languages, or one language and statistics or another research "tool". According to academic regulations, these tools should relate to research in the discipline in which the student is studying.

The department faculty strongly believe that a well-educated anthropologist will:

- become competent in a language used in the field of research;
- be able to read anthropological literature in a language other than English; and
- know technical & methodological tools needed to do appropriate data collection and analysis.

Ideally, one tool will be a language other than English.

The second tool may either be a second language or a technical tool. The student and his/her advisor jointly determine which additional tool is appropriate and useful in the student's dissertation research. The department Chair approves the selection of research tools by signing the "*Application for Certification of Proficiency in a Tool of Research*" form. Once the Chair's signature is registered on this form, students file the form in their own personal files until all certifications are complete.

Certifying language competence:

A. Certification of commonly taught languages with a literate tradition may be made by:

1. Course work at an appropriate level, with a grade of B or better;
2. Examination administered by the Department of Language and Foreign Studies at AU;
3. Examination administered at another appropriate institution;
4. Translation examination administered by the Department of Anthropology; or
5. Departmental certification of status as a native speaker.

B. Certification of field languages that are not widely taught and may not have broadly known literate traditions may be certified by:

1. The same means as commonly taught languages (as above); or
  2. Written certification by a teacher or native speaker that the student's competence is sufficient for fieldwork use.
- In general, students must demonstrate a sufficient level of language competence to be able to read anthropological literature in that language; certification of such competence must be registered on the "*Tool of Research*" form.

Non-language tools of research:

Tools other than languages may include statistics, particular quantitative or qualitative techniques (e.g., formal/content analysis of spoken or written text), computer languages, or other appropriate techniques as decided on by the student and advisor. Such tools may be certified by appropriate course work with a grade of B or above. Statistics may be certified via the use of appropriate statistical methods in the dissertation. In this case, the tool of research form will normally be filled out after data analysis is completed.

The department recommends:

- 1-credit modules in the Sociology Department's (SOCY 622 Selected Topics in Social Research Skills), and SIS (SIS 638 Selected Topics in International Development Skills).
- Quantitative methods courses offered by the Department of Mathematics and Statistics, or SIS.

NOTE: Anth 552 Anthropological Research Methods may not be used for certification of the tool requirement.

Students who take courses to fulfill the Research Tool requirement should have the appropriate "*Research Tool*" form certified immediately after completing the course. However, tools need to be chosen with the dissertation in mind; the department will not certify tools that have no connection to the proposed dissertation topic.

## DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

The doctoral dissertation represents an original scholarly contribution to the field of anthropology. In most cases, the dissertation is based on a program of sustained field research or other first-hand engagement with the issues under discussion in this project.

### *The dissertation committee*

Dissertations are written and revised under the guidance of a committee of (at least) three scholars. The chair of the committee (usually the candidate's academic advisor) must be a member of the full-time faculty in the Department of Anthropology at American U and hold an earned PhD. At least one other member must also be a full-time AU faculty member.

### *The dissertation proposal*

The dissertation process begins with the preparation of a dissertation proposal. Ordinarily the proposal contains:

- a description of the dissertation focus and goals including a summary of the topics to be explored, particulars of the research context, reasons for pursuing this project, etc.
- a review of the literature in anthropology and other fields relevant to the dissertation topic;
- a discussion of the plans for conducting the research, analyzing the data and preparing the dissertation text.

The candidate prepares the proposal in close consultation with the Chair of his/her dissertation committee and with other faculty members on the committee. After committee members are satisfied with the proposal, the advisor schedules an oral defense of the proposal. (Note: this defense counts as the candidate's 4th comprehensive examination. Registration is required for the exam/defense, as explained above, under Comprehensive Examinations). A satisfactory defense of the proposal allows the student to begin work on the dissertation project, as planned.

The Chair notifies the CAS Dean's office of the successful proposal defense by filling out the appropriate sections of the *Graduate Academic Action* form. A copy of the dissertation proposal title page signed by the Chair and other members of the committee must be included with this submission.

#### *Claiming ABD status*

Once the candidate has satisfied all four comprehensive exams requirements, completed the tool of research requirements, and completed all course work other than dissertation hours, the candidate is officially ABD (all-but dissertation), and may fill out the necessary forms to receive a MA in Anthropology if the candidate has not already received that degree.

#### *Dissertation hours*

The candidate is required to enroll in a minimum of six hours of dissertation seminar (ANTH 799); students generally sign up for one to two credit hours per semester. The seminar meets regularly throughout the academic year, and regular attendance is expected of all students in the D.C. area who are working on dissertation projects. Grades in the seminar are only Pass/Fail.

#### **Stay in touch with your advisor and committee**

Regular communication with your committee and especially with your dissertation advisor is expected throughout the research and writing period. Some advisors want to see drafts of individual chapters as soon as they are prepared while others prefer to read all the chapters at one time. Committee members should be asked for their preferences about how involved they wish to be in the earlier writing stages. The candidate should heed the commentary and suggestions of advisors and committee members. Candidates may want to ask staff, e.g. in the university's Writing Center, to review text and make suggestions regarding style and clarity of presentation.

#### *Format*

The format for the dissertation is strictly defined by university regulation. Requirements are outlined in the publication *A Guide to the preparation of Theses and Dissertations*, available through the CAS Dean's Office. It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that the dissertation meets these requirements. Documents that do not conform to university stipulations will not be accepted by the CAS or by the University Library.

#### *Dissertation Defense*

Once the advisor is satisfied, chapters are circulated to other members of the dissertation committee for their review and critique. When the committee determines that the dissertation is near completion, the advisor arranges for the formal dissertation defense. This event is open to the public; it opens with the candidate describing the dissertation research. Then the advisor and other committee members pose questions about the project, after which the advisor invites questions from other members of the audience.

If the committee decides that the candidate has successfully defended the dissertation, they sign the title page of the document. The defense usually concludes with the committee giving the candidate a list of changes and additions that need to be made to the dissertation text.

#### *Final Formalities*

Deadlines for completing the final dissertation manuscript are published in the Schedule of Classes each semester. Once those changes/additions are completed, and the advisor and other committee members are satisfied with the product, the procedure follows the same course as the MA thesis: the student circulates a clean and approved copy of the thesis to the Department Chair who will forward a "*Graduate Academic Action*" form to the office of Graduation Clearance to certify that thesis requirements have been met. A copy of the Thesis/Dissertation Completion Form, signed by the Department Chair and the Dean, must be taken to the Office of Students Accounts to pay the microfilming fee. The thesis then goes to the Dean's office in CAS and, with the Dean's approval, to the University Library. One copy of the dissertation must be given to the Department of Anthropology.

## **APPLICATION FOR GRADUATION**

PhD students are also responsible for filing an "*Application for Graduation*" with the Office of the Registrar, in which you indicate how your name should appear on the diploma, etc. There is no fee for this, but it must be submitted early, during the registration period of the last semester you are enrolled at AU.

- For a May graduation, the Application for Graduation must be filed by the middle of January.
- For a December graduation the form must be filed by the end of August.  
Check the university calendar for graduation application deadlines — you can always resubmit if you don't finish in time!!!!

Students receiving the PhD are always recognized individually during January and May graduation ceremonies. A candidate wishing to receive this recognition indicates the intention as part of the application process. Appropriate academic regalia also need to be order, through the Registrar's Office, at that time.