



University at Buffalo  
College of Arts and Sciences  
Department of Africana and American Studies  
Graduate Program Handbook  
2023-2024



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## Mission Statement

The Department of Africana and American Studies offers a range of degree programs that aim to promote excellence in cross-border, comparative, and interdisciplinary research and teaching. It administers the University's acclaimed graduate program in *American Studies*, which offers both masters and doctoral degrees. Graduate-level *African American, Native Studies Asian American and Latina/o studies* are also a constitutive part of the American Studies program. For undergraduates, the Department offers bachelor's degrees in African American Studies, and American Studies, as well as undergraduate minors in these fields and in *Polish Studies* and *Latino/a Studies*.

The department's faculty has brought these programs under one roof recognizing that each has a long history of exercising leadership in its separate field by exposing students to the challenges of membership in the world's ever more deeply connected, yet always diverse communities. The Department sees itself as the university's gateway for students eager to explore connections across boundaries of all kinds: across national borders, continents, and oceans; across lines of social identity; across time; between humanity and the natural environment; across the disciplines; between theory and practice; and between research and social engagement.

Transnational analysis is a crucial feature of all the department's programs. We recognize the paradox that nation states both sustain and rival centers of economic and political power that are larger and smaller than nations. Thus, our courses seek to analyze historical, cultural, and textual phenomena that straddle a great diversity of geographical territories in addition to those demarcated by national boundaries. Faculty specializations include hemispheric approaches to the Americas and Native societies; connections between the Americas and other continents, including the African, Asian, and European diaspora; the transoceanic networks of the Atlantic world; and connections that span the Pacific. Yet we also seek to ground those analyses in the everyday life that takes place on smaller geographic scales, including in households, cities, and Buffalo's own trans-border region, which coincides with the historic *Haudenauonee* (Iroquois) homeland.

Based on strengths in path-breaking interdisciplinary scholarship, the Department's faculty challenge students to examine the intersections between indigenous studies, critical race theory, post-colonial and post-national studies, critical class analysis, ethnic studies, environmental studies, disability studies, urban studies, Latin American studies, the study of social movements, and cultural studies. We believe in the essential complementarity of research methods that include literary criticism, archival research, ethnography, community-based inquiries, social surveys, and oral history.

Our courses also regularly give students hands-on opportunities to develop as future leaders in civic engagement and public policy. To sustain this cross-fertilization of cultural, intellectual, and political projects we believe in forging and sustaining links with institutions and scholars nationally and internationally. As such, the Department seeks to build on its wider cognition as a center of interdisciplinary and global studies.

## Introduction

The University at Buffalo – SUNY is situated within the homeland of the Seneca Nation, one of the six *Haudenosaunee* nations. Our intellectual traditions are grounded in this place where we are located, and we pride ourselves in challenging existing state-centered approaches by studying phenomena that cross a number of geographic, methodological, and disciplinary borders and boundaries. The Department has a strong tradition of Indigenous and Haudenosaunee Studies.

In the Department of Africana and American Studies, students can pursue an interdisciplinary graduate degree. The department offers both an MA and a PhD.

Currently, the Department of Africana and American Studies has over 130 students, including students from more than fifteen different countries. The Department has more than 15 faculty members with diverse interests ranging across the humanities and social sciences and geographical specialization in North America, Latin America, Eastern Europe, and Africa. The interdisciplinary and global focus of the Department of Africana and American Studies is unique in the College of Arts and Sciences.

The Department of Africana and American Studies was formed in 2011 from the merger of the following Departments and Programs: The Department of African and African-American Studies; the Department of American Studies; the Department of Global Gender Studies, (effective 8/15/2017 no longer a part of AAS); the Interdisciplinary MA Program in Caribbean Cultural Studies, (effective June/2015 no longer a part of AAS); the Latina/Latino Studies Program, and the Polish Studies program. In different ways, each of these constituent programs focuses on phenomena that challenge traditional political and disciplinary boundaries. Bringing our respective faculties together around this common orientation produces synergies and efficiencies across our degree programs. Our graduate programs reflect the breadth and diversity of our intellectual interests, but common to all of them is our commitment to offering our students a unique and rigorous approach to some of the most pressing and interesting concerns of our time.

This Handbook outlines the policies and procedures of graduate degree programs in the department. It is the sole responsibility of individual students to know and follow all such rules and policies, both of the Department and of the wider university. The student's advisor, the Director of Graduate Studies, and the Department's Graduate Coordinator can help with questions about the program, and our experience suggests that information from these sources, in conjunction with this handbook, is likely to be more accurate and authoritative than advice from elsewhere. This is especially true since we have currently active students who have been admitted prior to the formation of the department, and (unless they have opted not to do so) who are following the regulations in place in the program or department of their initial admission.

## Disclaimer

The availability of advice does not relieve the student of sole responsibility for completing necessary forms, initiating the formation of committees, honoring deadline dates at various points in his/her graduate studies, and generally meeting all departmental and graduate school regulations. Students should therefore read carefully this Graduate Student Handbook *in conjunction with* the Graduate School Policies and Procedures (available on the Graduate School website at <http://www.buffalo.edu/grad/succeed/current-students/policy-library.html>)

NOTE: In the event of a conflict, Graduate School policies supersede those adopted at the Department

level.

## Admissions

### General Information for All Applicants (MA and PhD)

Admission to the Master's and PhD programs offered by the Department of Africana and American Studies is open to students who hold a Bachelor's degree. The Bachelor's degree does not have to be in any particular discipline or field, but applicants must demonstrate a true interest in, and preparation for, studying in one of the constituent programs of the Department. Applicants to the PhD program whose qualifications are sufficient for the MA program but not for the PhD program will be admitted as MA students. U.S. citizens may apply for admission on a part-time basis as a non-matriculated student (however, doctoral students should be aware of the 7-year time limit to achieve the PhD). Students in the Master's program who have completed, or are in the final stage of completing, the MA degree at the University at Buffalo, must formally apply for admission to the PhD program in order to pursue the doctoral degree.

A minimum undergraduate GPA (grade point average) of 3.0, on a 4.0 scale, is required for admission. NOTE: You may request the Graduate Admissions Committee to waive these requirements, at its discretion, if other application materials are deemed to warrant admission to the graduate program. Applicants who have previously studied at the graduate level must have a cumulative GPA of at least 3.3 (on a 4.0 scale) in their graduate coursework. This requirement applies to all applicants – the Department's own MA students as well as applicants from other universities and other graduate programs at the University at Buffalo (UB).

Students currently enrolled in one of the MA programs in the Department of Africana and American Studies wishing to gain admission to one of our PhD programs must apply through the online application system. The \$75.00 application fee can be waived for current MA students. Applicants should submit a minimum of three letters of support from faculty members familiar with their work, at least one of which comes from within the Department. Other application materials do not need to be resubmitted if they are on file from the MA application. GRE Scores are required for the PhD program only.

All applicants to the MA and PhD programs must submit the following:

1. Completed online application form;
2. Unless otherwise noted, a \$75.00 (U.S. currency) non-refundable application fee may be paid online with a credit card.
3. Unofficial transcripts (which include your Grade Point Average) from *all* undergraduate colleges and universities attended should be uploaded with your application. At the same time, you must arrange to have original transcripts mailed from your conferring institution directly to the Department prior to admission;
4. At least three confidential letters of recommendation from persons familiar with your academic record should be uploaded with your application.
5. a sample of your writing (usually 10-20 double spaced pages) that accurately reflects your writing abilities.

International applicants must also provide the following:

1. Official copy of TOEFL scores.

2. A certified copy of the International Applicant Financial Statement form (with applicable supporting documents and signatures) sent to the department. You must submit this form showing at least enough funds in U.S. currency for one academic year. The form can be found through the online application system or at:  
<https://grad.buffalo.edu/explore/funding/cost.html>

The university's minimum scores on the TOEFL is 550 for the paper-based (PBT) test or 79 for the computer-based (iBT) test. The TOEFL score must be dated within two years of admission. UB does not currently require minimum cut-off scores for the four individual subsections. Although there is no required minimum section score, most accepted students are expected to achieve the following section scores: Reading: 19/30 Listening: 15/30 Speaking: 19/30 Writing: 19/30.

NOTE: It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that all materials are received by the posted deadline(s). Applicants can see what materials have been received by the Department by visiting their application status page online. Also, applicants need to check their email, provided on their application, frequently. Any necessary communication from the department will be done via email.

### Admission Deadlines

The admission deadlines for the Department of Africana and American Studies to receive ALL completed application materials are:

- The first Friday in January, for applicants seeking financial assistance in our PhD program.
- Master's applications are accepted on a rolling basis for our MA program in both spring and fall.

The department's *Graduate Admissions Committee* decides who will be admitted. These decisions are based on the strength of the application materials (GRE scores, undergraduate transcripts, letters of recommendation, personal statement, etc.) submitted by each applicant, from which the Committee assesses the applicant's likelihood of being successful in the graduate program.

NOTE: All admission decisions are final, so appeals to the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) will have no effect.

## Applicants to MA Programs

The Department of Africana and American Studies offers an array of MA programs.

### African American, Native American, Latina/o Studies and Asian American Studies

African American Studies, Native American, Latina and Asian American Studies do not, as yet, have their own independent graduate studies programs. Instead, they collaboratively participate in the American Studies Master's program (Option 1), and in the Interdisciplinary Master's program of the College of Arts and Sciences (Option 2). In either program, students can gain a broad introduction to the field suitable for pursuing further graduate studies in that or a related field or as a credential useful in its own right or in combination with another professional advanced degree, such as an MEd, MSW or MLS.

### American Studies

Our MA in American Studies program offers students a solid grounding in the professional study of the history and culture of the Americas. Because our program serves a varied audience – documentary producers, teachers, government workers, lawyers, social workers and pre-doctoral students – we offer a broad-based curriculum that includes many opportunities to pursue specific research interest. Most of our MA students complete the degree within two years.

## Applicants to PhD Programs

The Department of Africana and American Studies is home the American Studies doctoral program. This doctoral degree is based on graduate coursework, examinations, and original scholarship in the form of a dissertation written under the supervision of the student's advisor and dissertation committee.

### American Studies

American Studies is an interdisciplinary field of study that awards B.A., MA and PhD degrees. We take a global and hemispheric approach to the study of the Americas, examining local cultures, nations, and regions within their larger geopolitical contexts. Building on our traditional strengths in American Indian studies, critical race theory, class analysis, and community engagement, we encourage scholarly work on history, visual cultures, environmental and agricultural practices, religions, gender among other things. Our graduate students come from richly varied academic backgrounds. Most have earned undergraduate and/or graduate degrees in the humanities, arts, or social sciences, with majors in fields such as African American Studies, American Studies, Anthropology, Art, Economics, English, History, Law, Media Studies, Music, Political Science, Religious Studies, Romance Languages, Sociology, Teaching, Visual Studies, and Gender Studies. Whatever their educational backgrounds, successful applicants must demonstrate evidence of scholarly interest in the history and culture of the Americas.

## Joint AMS PhD and JD Degree

The American studies program has a joint JD AMS PhD program, 30 credit hours of a B or above in the JD degree can be counted toward the 72 credit hour requirements for the AMS PhD program.

## Program Applicant Enquiries

For more information about specific areas of study, please contact the following:

Professor Sharon Beckford-Foster  
Director of Graduate Studies  
[cecilfos@buffalo.edu](mailto:cecilfos@buffalo.edu)

Direct all other inquires to:

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[kp58@buffalo.edu](mailto:kp58@buffalo.edu)  
Graduate Programs Coordinator  
1010 Clemens Hall  
(716) 645-2082

## General Requirements for Graduate Students

### Program Planning and Advisement

#### Orientation

New students are required to attend the department's orientation session held just prior to the beginning of classes each fall semester. Incoming graduate students should consult with the Director of Graduate Studies before registering for specific courses. Orientation provides students with important information to help them get acclimated to the Graduate Program.

Students are encouraged to become creative scholars and teachers and to work independently. In selecting their courses, students will be expected to acquire a broad, balanced knowledge of their respective disciplines as a whole, as well as pursue their own specialized interests. In all cases students will have to take considerable personal initiative to develop an intellectually coherent pattern of study that will lead to the writing of a master's thesis, a master's project, or an original doctoral dissertation appropriate for their respective disciplines.

#### Advisement and Course Registration

Students in the Department of Africana and American Studies have a variety of sources for advice and mentoring. All students are required to have an academic advisor at all times in the program, as outlined in detail below, with the initial assignment to a member of the faculty being made for them in the first year. An initial advisor is generally a faculty member with a specialization related to the general area in which applicants have indicated an interest. New students are required to consult with their initial temporary advisor prior to finalizing their course selections. Beyond that, students are required to identify a major advisor by the end of their first year of studies.

Graduate students usually work under the supervision of their temporary advisor for a period of one academic year, during which time the advisor will monitor the student's progress and form an assessment of their ability to progress through the program in a timely fashion. At the end of that year, the advisor will use the "Annual Graduate Student Status Update" form (see appendix to this Handbook) to write an evaluation of the student's progress, including identifying areas of strength and progress but particularly those where the student may demonstrate a need for additional coursework given their previous education and future interests. In the latter cases, the student may be expected to address concerns through coursework or other measures before being permitted to sit for examinations.

By the beginning of the second year, students are **required** to identify an advisor from among the faculty in the Department who will serve in the capacity as either a permanent advisor, or as chair of the student's committee. Students should complete the "Faculty Academic Advisor/Committee Members" form and obtain the approval of the DGS for all committee assignments at this time.

Faculty advisors work closely with the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) who is responsible for overseeing all aspects of the department's graduate programs, for enforcing department degree programs and giving the necessary permission where called for, for ensuring that students are making satisfactory progress, and for monitoring and evaluating the students' overall teaching and academic performance. The DGS is supported by the *Graduate Studies Committee*.

In addition, the Coordinator of Teaching Assistants assists with the mentoring, performance evaluation, and assignments of the department's teaching assistants (TAs).

The Graduate Coordinator is also available for advice, but only on questions of a clerical nature and the administrative process.

#### Master's Committee

Initial supervision of a student's program is exercised by a faculty member temporarily appointed as an advisor. By the beginning of the second year master's students should have identified a major advisor under whose supervision they will work on their final thesis, project or portfolio. The major advisor must be either a full member or an associate member of UB's Graduate Faculty. A second committee member is required, but they not need to be a member of UB's Graduate Faculty.

#### Dissertation Committee

A doctoral dissertation committee, selected by the student with the approval of his or her home department, oversees the doctoral students work in preparing the PhD dissertation. The doctoral dissertation committee must be comprised of at least three core members: a major professor and at least two additional core committee members. Each core committee member must be a member of the UB Graduate Faculty. Associate members of the UB Graduate Faculty may not serve on doctoral dissertation committees as core members but may serve as additional committee members. On occasion, individuals who are neither members nor associate members of the UB Graduate Faculty may serve as additional dissertation committee members if their expertise would be of significant value to the student and the core members of the committee. Questions concerning the composition of doctoral dissertation committees should be referred to the Graduate School.

#### Student Responsibility

As per disclaimer above, the availability of advice does not relieve the student of sole responsibility for completing necessary forms, initiating the formation of committees, honoring deadline dates at various points in his/her graduate studies, and generally meeting all departmental and graduate school regulations. Students should therefore read carefully this Graduate Student Handbook in conjunction with the Graduate School Policies and Procedures (available on the Graduate School website at <http://www.buffalo.edu/grad/succeed/current-students/policy-library.html>)

**NOTE:** In the event of a conflict, Graduate School policies supersede those adopted at the Department level.

## Coursework

### Course Load

A student must register for 12 credit hours per semester to have full-time status (be considered by the University as full-time). Anything less than 12 credit hours is considered part-time. ONLY Teaching Assistants are considered full-time when registered for 9 credit hours.

### Minimum Grade and GPA Requirements

The minimum satisfactory grade in graduate courses is B. A course cannot be applied toward the degree requirements if the student received a final grade below this minimum. Students receiving a grade lower than B in a graduate course earn no credit toward the total required for the degree and must retake the course if it is required. Master's students must maintain at least a 3.00 GPA (grade point average) throughout their coursework doctoral students must maintain at least a 3.33 GPA throughout their coursework. PhD Students failing to maintain their cumulative GPA above the minimum (and students maintaining that minimum but nonetheless experiencing difficulties in the program) will be placed on academic probation at the Department level for a period of at least one semester. Students placed on probation will be notified in writing regarding the terms of their probation. Failure to meet the probation terms will result in the student being dropped from the graduate program.

### Independent Study/Directed Readings

For special needs, the Department has independent study courses to supplement its scheduled seminars (see degree requirements for details). Additionally, PhD students typically register for Independent Studies when preparing for their Comprehensive Exams. Students who wish to take an independent study course must arrange with a professor to serve as the instructor before they are allowed to be registered for it (under the professor's name). The Independent Study/Directed Reading form must be filled out by the student, signed by the faculty instructor, and then submitted to the Graduate Coordinator for DGS for approval, along with the addendum. Once approved this form will be placed in the student's file The "Independent Study/Directed Readings Approval" form is appended to this Handbook or the Graduate Coordinator.

### Non-Department Courses for Degree Requirements

There are limits on the number of courses that may be taken outside the program (prefixes AAS, AMS, or TNS) for credit in terms of degree requirements. Students wishing to petition to include classes from outside the program for degree requirements must complete the appropriate form prior to the semester the course is offered (appended to this Handbook or Graduate Coordinator), receive the prior approval of the student's advisor, the Director of Graduate Studies, and the Graduate Committee. Students are encouraged to take advantage of the breadth of faculty expertise within the Africana and American Studies department and to take courses with the AAS, AMS, and TNS prefixes. The Department makes every effort to cross-list courses by affiliated faculty with appropriate content to provide students with not only the broad disciplinary training and subject area content knowledge requisite for our degrees but also specialized knowledge appropriate to developing particular areas of expertise. The Department nevertheless encourages and recognizes the value of interdisciplinary research, and, therefore, acknowledges that it may be beneficial for students— depending upon their specific research interests— to take courses from other departments in specialized areas not ordinarily offered by Africana and American Studies faculty.

NOTE: You may petition for such course to count toward your program's seminar requirements. You will need to file the Petition for Approval of Course Taken outside the Department to count for Degree Credit. Your major advisor's justification/endorsement must be included and submitted to the Graduate Coordinator for the DGS's approval.

### Shared Credits

In cases where a student wishes to utilize selected graduate level courses to satisfy the degree requirements of more than one post-baccalaureate (graduate and/or professional) degree program, the following limitations apply:

1. The integrity of each master's level degree program must be observed by the student's completion of a minimum of 24 semester hours of credit at UB. Individual degree programs may establish minimum credit hour requirements that exceed that level.
2. No more than 10 percent of the total credit hours required to complete two UB master's degree programs may be comprised of "shared courses" (i.e., courses applied to both programs). For example, in the case of two MS degree programs each of which requires 30-credits (i.e., a total of 60), no more than six credit hours (10 percent) of the 60 may be comprised of courses applied to both programs. Similarly, in the case of two-degree programs that, in total, require 90 credit hours between them, no more than nine credit hours (10 percent) of the 90 may be comprised of courses applied to both programs.
3. In cases where one or more specific courses are explicitly required by both programs (i.e., not merely as acceptable electives), such course(s) are considered "shared courses" under policy definitions and will be the first course(s) counted toward the 10 percent limit. If those specific courses explicitly required by both programs exceed the normal 10 percent "shared courses" limit, the 10 percent limit is waived and all such courses may be counted toward both degrees.
4. Up to 50 percent of a student's PhD program may be comprised of courses used to complete another degree program at UB or at another institution. **A minimum of 50 percent of the PhD program must consist of courses completed at UB that have not been applied toward any other degree program.**

### Undergraduate Courses

Undergraduate courses may be taken by graduate students as appropriate prerequisites to their chosen field of study but may not be used to satisfy graduate program requirements or carry graduate credit. Exceptions are possible for some 400-level courses subject to approval in advance by the Director of Graduate Studies, the course instructor and the Graduate School.

### Transfer Credits

A student who wishes to receive credit for graduate work taken outside of the University should make this request as soon as possible after they enter the program (preferably within their first year). The decision whether to transfer credits will be made by the DGS in consultation with professors from relevant field committees.

Only those graduate courses completed at accredited or recognized institutions of higher education and with grades of 'B' or better are eligible for consideration for transfer credit. Courses with grades of 'S' or 'P' are not transferable unless the student or department provides written documentation from the instructor(s) of the course, a department administrator, or the registrar at the transfer

institution that the 'S' or 'P' graded course was equivalent to at least a 'B' grade.

No more than 20% of a master's program may be comprised of credits from another graduate academic program at UB, other accredited higher education institutions, or a combination thereof. For example, students pursuing a 30- credit UB master's degree may transfer up to 6 credits into their program. Transfer credits for the doctoral degree may not constitute more than one-half the total credits of that specific degree program.

The Director of Graduate Studies must formally evaluate any transfer credits. Upon receipt of the transfer credit petition, the Graduate School will evaluate credit and grade equivalencies as well as verify the courses were completed at an accredited or recognized institution of higher education. Transfer credits may be approved and recorded on the student's UB record *only* after the Graduate School or International Admissions receives the official final transcript. Students interested in transferring courses should schedule to meet with the DGS. They should bring the petition form, along with syllabi and transcripts for the courses they want transferred in. Link to graduate forms, <https://www.buffalo.edu/grad/succeed/current-students/forms.html>

#### Old Coursework

Courses applied toward the degree requirements must comply with the following Graduate School policy: "Coursework, whether transfer or UB credits, more than 10 years old that is to be included in a degree program must be petitioned at the time of the student's admission to the program or at the time the credits are considered by the Department. An early decision is to the advantage of both student and program. If these credits have been included in an approved extension of time limit petition, they are valid only until the expiration date of that petition. Accordingly, any further extension of an approved time limit for degree completion will require, concurrently, a re-petition for approval of these older courses."

Requests for approval of courses more than 10 years old must be petitioned through the Graduate School using the **correct** Graduate School form. Students who want to put forward such a petition must consult with the DGS. Note that appropriate justification of how the courses relate to the student's degree program, and how the student has kept current with the subject matter covered by the courses, must be provided in the petition.

#### Continuous Registration

The University requires graduate students to maintain continuous registration until they confer their degree by registering for at least one credit hour each semester (Fall/Spring). Note though that TAs must always have full- time status. A related and strictly enforced Graduate School rule is that the MA or PhD degree cannot be conferred if the student's registration is not current. Students must be registered during the semester prior to their graduation/conferral date (excluding the summer). For example, a student wishing to graduate on June 1st (or August 31st) must be registered for the preceding spring semester.

## Grades and Evaluation of Student Performance

### Minimum Grade Requirement

As stated above, the grade of B is considered the minimal satisfactory grade in graduate courses. Students receiving a grade lower than B in a graduate course will earn no credit and must retake the course if it is required.

### Incompletes (“I/U” Grades)

Students are expected to complete coursework ON TIME. A grade of Incomplete may be given ONLY in rare instances in which the student has not been able to complete all of the assigned coursework due to illness or other unforeseeable and compelling circumstances. Whether incompletes are given at all, and what deadline is set for finishing the missing/late coursework is at the prerogative of the instructor to the extent that the conditions set comply with the general rules of the University, Graduate School, and Department. Faculty members should make their policy on Incompletes clear at the beginning of each semester, preferably on the course syllabus.

The University allows students one semester (beyond the semester during which the course was taken) to resolve an Incomplete. For example, students who received an Incomplete in a course taken in fall 2016 would have no longer than the end of the spring 2018 semester (May 31st) to complete all missing/late coursework required by the instructor for a final grade. But note that the instructor may choose a shorter time period for completing this coursework. If course requirements are not completed by the instructor’s or University’s deadline, the Incomplete will automatically be changed to an Unsatisfactory (“U”) grade. Once an Incomplete is changed to a “U” grade, the course, if offered again, may be repeated for credit.

### “L” Grades

“L” grades are given to show continuation of a course. They may be used in place of an “S” grade for Dissertation Guidance or Master’s Thesis/Project Guidance. Once a student’s degree is conferred, the “L” grades will default to “S” grades. Thus, an “L” grade should not be assigned unless it is the equivalent of an “S” grade.

### Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory Grades

Satisfactory (“S”) grades indicate credit earned for a course; whereas Unsatisfactory (“U”) grades indicate no credit earned. That is, an “S” can only be awarded in place of a passing mark. For the Department of Africana and American Studies, a passing mark is a “B.” Therefore, a “U” is the equivalent of any grade less than B (B- and below). Neither “S” nor “U” grades are calculated in a student’s GPA. However, both do appear on a student’s transcript. Also, “S” and “U” grades will be used to determine a student’s academic standing. Thus, the presence of “U” grades can be used to place a student on academic probation. This rule also applies to “U” grades that were received as a result of a defaulted Incomplete. Students who previously received a “U” in a course that is offered again can take the course over for credit.

S/U grading is typically used for Dissertation Guidance, Master's Thesis Research, and other informal courses such as Supervised Teaching, Directed Readings and Independent Studies. Taking other classes as S/U is not recommended, but, under special circumstances, the DGS may grant an exception. This exception must be approved by the DGS and the faculty instructor prior to the start of the course. All faculty members should make their policy on S/U grading known at the beginning of each semester, preferably in their course syllabi.

"S" grades are not included in the calculation of a student's overall GPA, but the credits earned may count toward the required hours for the degree (i.e., 30 for the MA and 72 for the PhD). Outside of Dissertation and Thesis Guidance credits, the Department limits MA students to a maximum of two 3-credit hour courses graded as S/U and PhD students to a maximum of four 3-credit courses as S/U. Any questions regarding this rule should be addressed to the DGS.

### Evaluations and Reviews

All graduate students in the program are evaluated at the end of each academic year unless their performance is unsatisfactory in which case they are evaluated on a semi-annual basis. These annual and semi-annual reviews take into account grades (including Incompletes), course evaluations by instructors, progress toward degree completion, and, when relevant, performance as a teaching assistant.

Each review provides an overall performance rating of outstanding, satisfactory, or unsatisfactory. The review will also provide feedback on the student's strengths and weaknesses, assessing their ability to complete the degree and, if appropriate, their potential as a PhD candidate or for a successful academic career. In the case of unsatisfactory performance, the DGS consults with the Graduate Studies Committee on whether the student should be placed on academic probation and, if funded, whether their teaching assistantship should be rescinded (not renewed). Once a student is placed on academic probation, future unsatisfactory reviews may result in the student being terminated from the graduate program.

NOTE: Full-time doctoral students are expected to pass their PhD comprehensive exams by the end of the first semester of their fourth year in the program. Failure to achieve this will be treated as unsatisfactory progress toward completion of the degree requirements.

## Academic Integrity

As part of our community of scholars, we know that you share a commitment to learning and discovery. And along with the privilege of membership of the scholarly community comes an important obligation to adhere to principles of academic integrity. We define academic integrity as “a commitment, even in the face of adversity, to five fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility” (from p. 4 of *The Fundamental Values of Academic Integrity*, a report published by the International Center for Academic Integrity and accessed here: <https://www.academicintegrity.org>)

Needless to say, the Department takes very seriously, and strongly enforces, the University’s policies on academic integrity. See the section on academic integrity in the Graduate School’s Policies and Procedures manual available here: <https://www.buffalo.edu/grad/succeed/current-students/policy-library.html>

### Examples of Academic Dishonesty

To quote the manual, academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- *Previously submitted work.* Submitting academically required material that has been previously submitted -- in whole or in substantial part -- in another course, without prior and expressed consent of the instructor.
- *Plagiarism.* Copying or receiving material from any source and submitting that material as one’s own, without acknowledging and citing the particular debts to the source (quotations, paraphrases, basic ideas), or in any other manner representing the work of another as one’s own.
- *Cheating.* Soliciting and/or receiving information from, or providing information to, another student or any other unauthorized source (including electronic sources such as cellular phones and PDAs), with the intent to deceive while completing an examination or individual assignment.
- *Falsification of academic materials.* Fabricating laboratory materials, notes, reports, or any forms of computer data; forging an instructor’s name or initials; resubmitting an examination or assignment for reevaluation which has been altered without the instructor’s authorization; or submitting a report, paper, materials, computer data, or examination (or any considerable part thereof) prepared by any person other than the student responsible for the assignment.
- *Misrepresentation of documents.* Forgery, alteration, or misuse of any University or Official document, record, or instrument of identification.
- *Confidential academic materials.* Procurement, distribution or acceptance of examinations or laboratory results without prior and expressed consent of the instructor.
- *Selling academic assignments.* No person shall sell or offer for sale to any person enrolled at the University at Buffalo any academic assignment, or any inappropriate assistance in the preparation, research, or writing of any assignment, which the seller knows, or has reason to believe, is intended for submission in fulfillment of any course or academic program requirement.
- *Purchasing academic assignments.* No person shall purchase an academic assignment intended for submission in fulfillment of any course or academic program requirement.

## Project / Thesis / Dissertation Topics

A major component of graduate education consists of writing a Masters project or thesis, or a doctoral dissertation, in which you demonstrate your capacity for defining and executing a significant and novel piece of research. In selecting your topic for these major projects, you MUST consider the range of faculty expertise and interest that is available to you in the Department and affiliated faculty. You should discuss your choice of topic in a detailed and timely manner with your advisors and/or dissertation committee. If there is insufficient expertise in an area of interest to a student, projects/theses/ /dissertations in that area, your advisor will a guide you in changing your topic.

## Other Policies and Procedures

### Leave of Absence

If continuous registration cannot be maintained due to unique personal circumstances (health issues, study abroad, family emergencies, etc.), it is possible to petition the Department and the Graduate School for a Leave of Absence. The appropriate petition form is available at the Graduate School website, <https://www.buffalo.edu/grad/succeed/current-students/forms.html>

This petition must be approved by both the DGS and the Graduate School. Note though that a student cannot be formally on leave during the semester preceding the conferral of their degree. Similarly, being on leave does not stop the clock for resolving incompletes to prevent them from reverting to “F” grades.

### NOTE:

- If applicable, check with your health insurance carrier and student loans before filing for a LOA.
- One should apply for a Leave of Absence well in advance of the semester’s start

### Time Limits

The MA degree must be completed within four years and the PhD degree must be completed within *seven* years of entering the program. Under rare, exceptional circumstances, the Graduate School will approve petitions for extensions of these time limits. Petitions must be submitted using the appropriate Graduate School form <https://www.buffalo.edu/grad/succeed/current-students/forms.html> with the required documentation attached to the Graduate Coordinator for the DGS approval.. Only formal, approved Leaves of Absence will stop the clock for degree time limits.

### Part-Time Students

While students are permitted to study on a part-time basis, they will not be considered for TA assignments and will be expected to maintain steady progress toward their degree. The College will not provide tuition scholarships to part-time students.

NOTE: The 7 year time limit for the PhD program and the 4 year time limit for the master’s program still apply.

### Application to Candidacy ('ATC')

*PhD Students:* An *Application to Candidacy* form (ATC) should be filed with the Department when the student has an expected date for completing the degree requirements. Doctoral students should file an ATC upon completion of their comprehensive exams. Students seeking certification of full-time status may have to file the ATC earlier than this. However, it is only with the completion of the comprehensive exam that students are approved to advance to candidacy and officially file with the Graduate School. The form can be found on the Graduate School's website:

<https://grad.buffalo.edu/succeed/current-students/forms.html>

NOTE: Each student is responsible for obtaining the signatures of their committee members on the ATC before submitted it to the Graduate Program Coordinator, who will then give it to the DGS to review and sign.

*MA Students:* MA students must apply for graduation in HUB to declare their intention to graduate. Students must apply by the deadline of the degree conferral term. More information can be found here: <http://www.buffalo.edu/grad/succeed/graduate/apply-for-graduation.html>

MA students who have previously applied for graduation, and have an existing expected graduation term in HUB, will not be able to modify or apply for graduation in HUB again. To update the expected graduation term, file a Petition to Change Expected Conferral Date.

### M-Form

The M-form is filled out at the completion of any MA project, MA thesis, or PhD dissertation. Its submission officially informs the Graduate School that a student has completed the degree and ready to graduate. The student completing the project, thesis, or dissertation should fill out as much of the required information as possible on the M-form in the appropriate sections and then have their committee chair (major professor) sign it where indicated. The M-form can be found on the Graduate School's website: <https://grad.buffalo.edu/succeed/current-students/forms.html>. This form is due to the Graduate Program Coordinator as soon as the thesis, project, or dissertation is approved by the student's committee (after a successful oral defense, if applicable), but no later than the Wednesday before the Graduate School's deadline to receive all required materials.

The chart below lists the deadline dates by which the ATC form, the M-form, and all other required materials should be received by the Department/Graduate School.

NOTE: It is the student's responsibility to make certain that she/he meets these deadlines, and failing to meet the final one set by the Graduate School will result in the student's conferral being delayed to the

next period (e.g., failing to meet the final deadline for spring would delay conferral to summer). Hence, students should be pro-active about the process by letting the DGS know at least a month before about their intent to graduate at the end of the semester, confirming the specific final deadlines set by the Department and Graduate School for receiving the M-form and all other required materials, and submitting these materials well ahead of those deadlines if possible.

<b>Degree Conferral Date</b>	<b>PhD ATC to Dept.</b>	<b>PhD ATC to Grad School</b>	<b>MA Application to Graduate in HUB</b>	<b>All Materials to Grad School</b>
<b>Fall (February 1)</b>	September 1	October 1	October 15	January 15
<b>Spring (June 1)</b>	February 1	March 1	February 22	May 14
<b>Summer (August 31)</b>	June 1	July 1	July 15	August 14

### Exceptions

The department recognizes that many of its requirements and procedures may not apply to all graduate students, and that from time to time a graduate student has legitimate and reasonable cause to be exempted from a specific requirement, or to be allowed to fulfill a modified form of a requirement. Consequently, students have the opportunity to petition the Graduate Committee to grant exemptions or changes in requirements or procedures. All petitions to the Graduate Committee should state clearly what the nature of the petition is and offer compelling justification for the request. All petitions must be approved by the student’s advisor before being submitted to the Graduate Committee. The decision of the Graduate Committee is generally final in all matters of the Department policies, procedures, and requirements, including petitions.

### English Language Requirement

University policy requires that all international students from non-English-speaking countries must demonstrate proficiency in spoken English in order to hold a teaching assistantship or teach an undergraduate course. Hence, all such students are urged to take the SPEAK Test as soon after their arrival at the University as possible. The SPEAK Test is passed with a score of 55 or 60. Students who receive a score of 50 can petition for a chance to demonstrate their English language proficiency in a teaching presentation before representatives of the English as a Second Language (ESL) Program and the Department. ALL international students from non-English-speaking countries and U.S. Nationals whose native language is NOT English must pass the UB SPEAK Test no later than the end of their first year of study in the doctoral program. Students who receive a score of 40 or lower must retake the SPEAK Test. It is recommended that such students complete ESL 512 prior to retaking the SPEAK Test.

Students who have not passed the UB SPEAK Test prior to the beginning of their second year of study in the doctoral program will be placed on academic probation at the department level and potentially barred from registering for Africana and American Studies courses until they pass the test. Funded students who have not satisfied this requirement by the end of their first year of study will not have their funding renewed. All students whose first or dominant language is not English will have their language proficiency reviewed as part of the Semi-Annual Review. Such students will be expected to demonstrate increasing fluency in both written and spoken English during their academic studies. Failure to achieve English proficiency in a reasonable period of time may result in the student being dropped from the graduate program.

For more information visit: <http://www.buffalo.edu/english-language-institute/graduate/speak-test.html>

### Certification of Full-Time Status

PhD students preparing for their comprehensive exams or working on their dissertation who need to maintain full-time status (e.g., for financial aid reasons) can be certified as full-time while being registered for fewer than 12 credit hours (or 9 credits if the student is a TA). A Certification of Full-Time Status form must be filled out, signed appropriately, and given to the Graduate Program Coordinator, an Application to Candidacy form must be filed along with this form. Both forms are available at the Graduate School website: <https://www.buffalo.edu/grad/succeed/current-students/forms.html>

### Research Involving Human Subjects

The University at Buffalo has established an Assurance of Compliance with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) regulations governing research involving human subjects. Since research comprises a vital part of graduate education and research may involve human subjects, graduate students must be aware of their responsibilities. NOTE: It is the policy of the University that all research involving human subjects must be reviewed and approved by a University Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to initiation of the research. The College of Arts and Sciences Dean of Research or Director of Graduate Studies can direct students to the appropriate board. For more information: <https://www.buffalo.edu/research/research-services/compliance/irb.html>

## GENERAL MASTER'S REQUIREMENTS

### Duration

The MA degree normally involves at least 32 credit hours of graduate study. A master's program takes 4 semesters of full-time graduate study to complete but must be conferred within 4 years of entering the program according to the Graduate School. In exceptional circumstances, students can petition the Graduate School for an extension of the time limit. With a well-formed plan, full-time students should be able to finish in two years.

### Master's Committee

Initial supervision of a student's program is exercised by a faculty member temporarily appointed as an advisor. By the beginning of the second year students should have identified a major advisor under whose supervision they will work on their final thesis, project or portfolio. The major advisor must be either a full member or an associate member of UB's Graduate Faculty. A second committee member is required, but they do not need to be a member of UB's Graduate Faculty.

### Thesis/Project

The Master's Thesis or Research Project is written under the direction of two faculty members: one serves as the committee chair (major advisor) or first reader, the other serves as a committee member or second reader. As noted above, students MUST select topics that fall within the range of expertise of African and American Studies faculty and affiliated faculty members. The Department is under no obligation to approve project/thesis topics that do not align with the expertise and interests of members of its faculty. The student is responsible for asking faculty members to serve in these roles and to have them sign their Application to Candidacy form (see relevant section below). When appropriate, faculty members from outside of the Department may participate in the guidance of theses and projects. While students are working on their thesis or project, they should register for the section of Master's Thesis Supervision for which their first reader (major advisor) is listed as the instructor.

When completed, Master's Thesis must be defended orally by the student at a public meeting. Furthermore, theses must be submitted electronically to the Graduate School and meet other University requirements. For further details, please see the Graduate School's graduation requirements and deadlines: <https://www.buffalo.edu/grad/succeed/graduate/requirements.html>

### Certification of Full-Time Status

MA students working on their Thesis or Research Project who need to maintain full-time status (e.g., for financial aid reasons) can be certified as full-time while being registered for fewer than 12 credit hours each semester. A Certification of Full-Time Status form must be completed, signed appropriately, and given to the Graduate Coordinator. Note that an application to Graduate in HUB must be submitted also. More information is available here: <https://grad.buffalo.edu/succeed/graduate.html>

Master's students studying on a part-time basis do not have to be certified for full-time status.

## PROGRAM-SPECIFIC MASTER'S REQUIREMENTS

### American Studies

Thirty-two credits are required for the MA in American Studies, including a minimum of seven seminars with AAS, AMS, or TNS prefixes. With prior approval of the DGS, a maximum of 2 graduate courses can be taken outside of the AAS Department. We encourage you to fulfill your credit requirement primarily through taking graduate seminars, (with AAS, AMS and TNS prefixes). As you approach the completion of your degree, it may be appropriate for you to register for independent studies/directed readings courses with your major professor or another professor with expertise in your area(s) of interest. To register for such a course, you must complete an Independent Study/Directed Readings form, which is in essence a contract between you and the professor in which you establish a reading list, a list of written assignments, a method of evaluation, and deadlines. This form must be signed by the student, the professor, and the DGS.

Initial supervision of a student's program is exercised by a faculty member temporarily appointed as an advisor. By the beginning of the second year students should have identified a major advisor in AAS under whose supervision they will work on their final thesis, project or portfolio. The major advisor must be either a full member or an associate member of UB's Graduate Faculty. A second committee member is required, but they do not need to be a member of UB's Graduate Faculty. To complete your degree you must work with your committee to complete either the traditional thesis or a final project.

- A. A traditional thesis of 60-80 pages (15,000 to 20,000 words) based on original research and analysis. Your thesis must include a full bibliography of works cited. The thesis must be presented in a consistent scholarly format, such as the MLA Handbook or The Chicago Manual of Style. For further guidelines, please read a booklet entitled Guidelines for Graduation and Thesis and Dissertation Preparation, available on the Graduate School's website at: <http://www.buffalo.edu/grad.html>
- B. A final project involving fieldwork, non-written media (e.g., documentary film, oral interviews, art exhibition, photography, power-point multimedia presentation, or multimedia website), and/or a new form subject to approval by the Graduate Committee and/or the Director of Graduate Studies. This project must include an extensive essay (25-50 pages) in which you contextualize, analyze, reflect on, and interpret the project, incorporating additional research and literature as appropriate to this end. The project must include a full bibliography of works cited and must be presented in accordance with consistent format, such as the MLA Handbook or the Chicago Manual of Style.

When approaching the completion of your thesis or project, you are required to schedule a public thesis or project defense in consultation with your committee. This oral defense must be attended by your major professor and other committee member(s). It must be announced to the public. Other faculty, students, staff, friends, and family are welcome to attend.

## African-American, Native American, Asian American and Latina/o Studies

As noted earlier, African American, Native American, Asian American and Latina/o Studies do not, as yet, have their own independent graduate studies program, though we are in the process of designing and seeking approval for one. In the interim, the program collaboratively participates in the American Studies graduate program (Option 1) and the interdisciplinary Master's program of the College of Arts and Sciences (Option 2) <http://gradidp.buffalo.edu/>).

## Master of Arts in Humanities (MAH)

For example: If a student chooses Option 2 then the student would apply to enroll in the Master of Arts in Humanities (MAH) program. This interdisciplinary graduate program requires a student to have two majors from among participating departments. Choosing African American Studies as a major in the program enables students to combine their interests in subject areas in African American studies with specialties elsewhere

- e.g., American Studies, English Literature, Media Study, Film Studies, Languages, Visual Studies, Classics, Global Gender Studies, and so on.

## MAH Requirements

Completion of a total of 36 credit hours of course work, comprising:

- a) 12 credit hours in an arts or humanities discipline.
- b) 12 additional credit hours in an arts, humanities, social, or natural sciences discipline.
- c) 6 credit hours of related elective course work; and
- d) 6 credit hours of project/thesis guidance. (An interdisciplinary committee consisting of a faculty member from each of the student's two fields of concentration must be constituted to supervise the final project/thesis.)

Students interested in pursuing the MAH degree must apply through the Humanities Interdisciplinary (MA) program and seek approval of directors of graduate studies in both departments of their concentrations, and develop a program approved by both departments. NOTE: All requirements of the respective departments must be met in order to participate in these collaborative graduate programs. We do not have separate requirements for the MAH.

As a first step, potential applicants wishing to do an MAH concentration in African American Studies must, at the same time, identify a second concentration and proceed to contact the relevant department for approval. Once admitted into the MAH program, the applicant should notify the Graduate Coordinator in Africana and American Studies and work with both departments as they progress through the program.

## General Doctoral Requirements

### Duration

The time it takes to complete the Doctoral Program varies in duration with the individual student's abilities, drive, educational background, and personal circumstances, but the PhD degree must be conferred within 7 years of entering the program (unless the Graduate School approves the student's petition for an extension of the time limit).

### Credit Hour Requirements

A total of 72 credit hours are required for the PhD of which at least 40 must be beyond the MA level.

### Coursework/Seminar Requirements

You must adhere to the seminar requirements for your individual program. With the DGS's prior approval courses can be taken outside the AAS Department, however they won't count as a seminar requirement. To obtain approval, the petition can be obtained from the Graduate Coordinator

### Independent Studies/Directed Readings

We encourage you to fulfill your credit requirement primarily by taking regular graduate seminars from Africana and American Studies faculty. As you approach the completion of your coursework, it may be appropriate for you to register for independent studies or directed readings courses with your major advisor or another professor with expertise in your area(s) of interest. To register for such a course, you must complete an Independent Study/Directed Readings form prior to the beginning of the semester, which is in essence a contract between you and the professor in which you establish a reading list, a list of written assignments, a method of evaluation, and deadlines. This form must be signed by you, the instructor, and the Director of Graduate Studies. This form can be obtained from the Graduate Program Coordinator.

### Comprehensive Committee

By completion of the program's seminar requirements you will have taken seminars with AAS faculty that have expertise in your area of study. You should begin planning your committee by identifying those faculty you'd like to serve as your major advisor and committee members. Your committee must be comprised of at least three core members: A major advisor and two additional core members. All three PhD committee members must be members of UB's Graduate Faculty. You should also begin preparing for your comprehensive exams at this time by taking Directed Readings/Independent Studies with faculty in your fields. If you need to maintain full time status you'll need to file an Application to Candidacy and Full Time Status request, both forms can be found here, <https://www.buffalo.edu/grad/succeed/current-students/forms.html>. Your Comprehensive Committee can be the same as your Dissertation Committee, however it is not required and can be changed at any time.

## Comprehensive Examinations

1. All doctoral students must successfully complete a comprehensive examination involving both written and oral components. This examination covers three broad fields to be pursued under the guidance of an examination committee chosen from the faculty in the Department or in allied departments. One question on the written component of the comprehensive exam must be associated with each field. The oral examination covers all three fields.
2. **Field choices for American Studies PhD** students are, History, Cultural Studies, Law & Social Policy and Theory & Methodology. These fields are reflected in the AMS course offerings.
3. Once the fields and readings have been agreed upon by the student and committee members, no changes in the faculty membership of the student's committee will be permitted. If, however, under highly exceptional circumstances such changes become necessary for any reason, any new member(s) of the committee will need to agree upon a field and reading list with the student before the comprehensive examination can be scheduled or re-scheduled. This circumstance could result in a significant delay in the examination process, and it will therefore be permitted only in exceptional circumstances by the Director of Graduate Studies and the Graduate Committee.
4. Members of the student's committee will each provide one question, with the general subject (field) and readings to be determined by the committee members in consultation with the student.
5. Written answers to each exam question must be submitted within one week after the student receives the question. Answer for all three questions (the entire written exam) must be completed in three weeks, starting from when the student receives the first question.
6. Written responses will be evaluated by all committee members, with the committee member in charge for each question taking the lead in written evaluation of the question. These evaluations will be submitted to the chair of the committee (the student's major advisor) as soon as possible after the submission of the written exam.
7. An oral examination, at which the three committee members constitute the examining committee, will be scheduled as soon as possible upon submission of the written examination— and no later than two weeks after all written answers are submitted, unless there are exceptional circumstances which must be approved by the DGS. The oral exam will be generally based on the student's written responses to the examination questions, the literature covered on the reading list, and general knowledge of the field in which the student is examined.
8. When preparing for the oral examination, the student may consult with her/his committee chair about the exam result **only in general terms. Under no circumstances should the student be advised of her/his specific performance and/or written evaluation on any particular question.** However, the advisor may suggest areas where the student **might** anticipate questioning on the oral exam in order that the student be able to focus her/his preparation for the oral portion of the examination. The student should also be prepared for questions in other areas as deemed appropriate by committee members.
9. The oral examination lasts approximately two hours. Based on the student's performance on both the written and oral responses, the committee determines whether the student has passed, passed with distinction, or failed specific exam questions, or the comprehensive examination as a whole. This result will be communicated by the committee chair to the Director of Graduate Studies.

**Note:** The following forms are required, please contact Graduate Coordinator.

1. Comprehensive Examination Fields/Bibliographies Approval Form
2. Comprehensive Examination Questions – DGS Approval Form
3. Comprehensive Examination Results

At the discretion of the examination committee, a student deemed to have failed the comprehensive examination may be permitted to take a second comprehensive examination, covering between one and three exam questions, during the following semester. Should the student's committee deem that the second performance is also Unsatisfactory, the student will not be eligible to continue in the doctoral program.

**NOTE:** PhD students who successfully pass their comprehensive exams are eligible to Apply to Candidacy for a master's degree should they wish to do so.

### Dissertation Committees

The composition is subject to the following guidelines:

The Dissertation Committee will have at least three faculty members, one of whom will be its Chair and who will have primary responsibility for directing the dissertation. All three members must be UB graduate faculty, unless a student is granted permission by the DGS to have a non-UB faculty member.

The Chair or Co-Chair and at least one other member of the Committee must be regular faculty in the Department of Africana and American Studies at the University at Buffalo. Additional members from outside the Department or the University at Buffalo may be added by mutual consent of the student, the student's committee, and the Director of Graduate Studies. The Director of Graduate Studies will review any requests for departures from the above rules and for subsequent changes in the committee after its initial formation and seek advice from the Africana and American Studies Graduate Committee as appropriate.

Constituting a Dissertation Committee is a professional decision made by students in consultation with the Committee Chair, and the prospective members. Students should select their committees with care, considering the contribution, expected time commitment, and appropriateness of each member invited to participate, given the research the student will pursue. *Faculty are under no obligation to participate as members of any student committee;* and students should keep in mind that faculty may resign from committees. Similarly, students are free to replace or add committee members; these issues should be handled directly and professionally. Be aware that changes to committee composition may delay completion of work. Changes should always be discussed with the Chair of the student's Dissertation Committee and the Director of Graduate Studies, and requested using the appropriate form appended to this Handbook or the Graduate Coordinator.

Once the Dissertation Committee is constituted, its composition can be changed at any time at the request of the student who must consult the Director of Graduate Studies and amend their Application to Candidacy. Under most circumstances, the committee that approves the dissertation and oral defense will be the same committee that approved the dissertation prospectus. The student and his/her Dissertation Committee will determine mutually understood procedures for advancing the work and a timetable for reviewing the dissertation in progress. The Dissertation Committee (jointly or individually) and the student should communicate formally at least once a semester to review the progress of dissertation once the student has defended the dissertation prospectus. Understand that failure to maintain regular communication may lead to faculty withdrawing from the committee.

Students must submit a draft of their dissertation to all Dissertation Committee members at least four weeks in advance of the date they intend to orally defend the work. A request to the DGS to schedule a final dissertation defense must be approved by all members of the Dissertation Committee and should be made using the appropriate form appended to this Handbook or contact the Graduate Coordinator.

**Note:** The following forms are required, please email your Africana and American Studies departmental Graduate Coordinator:

1. Dissertation Proposal Defense
2. Approval to Schedule a Dissertation Defense

## Program-Specific Doctoral Requirements

### American Studies

#### Required Coursework

##### A) **Fieldwork Methods** – 3 credits

Each year a AMS department seminar will be offered to meet this requirement. Requests from students to take a Field Methods course not offered by the Africana and American Studies department, must be approved prior to enrollment by the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) or the Chair of the Department.

##### B) **Cultural History** – 6 credits

*AMS 503 – Topics in Cultural History I* (3 credits)

*AMS 504 – Topics in Cultural History II* (3 credits)

**Note:** It is strongly recommended that students take these two courses within the first year of matriculation into the program. AMS 503 is offered each fall, and AMS 504 is offered each spring.

##### C) **10 Seminars** – 30 credits

Students must take 10 seminars totaling 30 credit hours. Any course taken under the following department course prefixes (AAS, AMS, TNS) automatically counts toward fulfilling this requirement. A maximum of 3 courses (9 credit hours) can be taken outside the Africana and American Studies department. Any course taken outside requires prior approval from the DGS or department Chair, and must complete the Petition for Approval of course for Degree Credit. However, such courses will not count toward the 10 seminar requirement.

**NOTE:** If your major advisor feels an outside course is necessary to your research, the course can be petitioned to count as one of the required seminars for your program. Your major advisor must be officially listed and approved by the DGS on the Faculty Academic Advisor/Committee Members form, or on your ATC, prior to submitting.

## Joint AMS PhD and JD Degree

The American Studies program has a joint JD AMS PhD program, 30 credit hours of a B or above in the JD degree can be counted toward the 72 credit hour requirements for the AMS PhD program.

## Financial Support

### Assistantships and Fellowships

Students receiving a teaching assistantship must be full-time students and are expected to work 20 hrs./week on their TA duties. Full-time status for students with assistantships is 9 credit hours. As discussed above, students studying for comprehensive exams or working on a project, thesis, or dissertation can be certified as full-time even if they are registered for less than 9 hours in a semester.

Assistantships are awarded competitively to two categories of students: incoming and continuing. Awards to incoming students are based on a variety of factors associated with their admission materials, including but not limited to:

- A. GRE scores
- B. Performance in undergraduate and graduate (if applicable) coursework
- C. Letters of recommendation
- D. Research interests
- E. Personal statement, and
- F. TOEFL scores (if applicable).

Awards to continuing students are based on overall academic performance, including course grades, performance of assistantship duties, progress toward completing degree requirements, and availability of funds to the department.

Teaching assistantships are granted for periods of one year and are renewable up to a total of four years with satisfactory progress. In order to be considered for a third or fourth year of support from the Department, students must demonstrate that they have completed (or will have completed by the beginning of their third year of support) the requirements for teaching an independent course in the Department. Additionally, as noted above, full-time PhD students are expected to pass their comprehensive exams by the end of the second semester of their third year in the program or else they will no longer be treated as making satisfactory progress toward degree completion.

Students holding *Schomburg Fellowships* are welcome to be considered for teaching assignments in the department, and are eligible for full consideration for all teaching awards and programs available to regular TAs. Schomburg Fellows who are interested in teaching should inform the Director of Graduate Studies of their desire, and work with Department members and staff to identify suitable courses.

All TA appointments are made on an annual basis. In order to facilitate teaching assignments, continuing students seeking to teach in the Department (including TAs and Schomburg Fellows) must submit a 'teaching interest form' each year (see appendix of this Handbook). These should be submitted to the DGS not later than February 15<sup>th</sup>

The evaluation will consist of a written evaluation of their teaching (when they have a teaching assignment), undertaken by the Coordinator of Teaching Assistants, that will entail an annual meeting at the end of each academic year. Students who are deemed to have done poorly in their TA assignments, or whose academic standing is in some way deficient, will not be renewed for a subsequent year.

students receiving assistantships will be eligible for a maximum of 4 years or 8 semesters of Departmental funding. In addition, a student can only be funded for a maximum of 72 credit hours (the number of credit hours required to obtain the PhD). Each semester of funding, the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) will pay for up to 9 credit hours of tuition assistance for TAs and 12 hours for Schomburg Fellows

The CAS pays tuition for TAs on a 'per credit hour' basis. Therefore, it is vital for TAs to tell the Graduate Coordinator how many credit hours they are actually registered for each semester. The CAS manually enters the amount of credit hours each TA is registered for into the University computer system. A TA can change his/her schedule by adding or deleting courses (credit hours) as long as the change takes place within the appropriate add/drop period and the Graduate Coordinator is notified of the change immediately. In other words, the action of dropping a class from or adding a class to one's schedule must be done before the penalty period begins (during the first week of classes). In addition, TAs cannot be (re)appointed unless they are registered for classes. Therefore, a student cannot legally work for UB (i.e., cannot receive a paycheck) unless he/she is registered for classes. Registering in a timely manner is pertinent.

All Teaching Assistants except international students are required to apply for New York State (NYS) Residency, if they are not already a New York State resident, during their first semester of their assistantships. The process of establishing NYS residency actually begins in August as soon as the student begins their studies at UB. Please visit the Student Accounts website for the appropriate steps to take and forms: <http://www.buffalo.edu/studentaccounts/nys-residency.html>

### Fifth Year Teaching Assistantship Awards

Fifth year funding is competitive and contingent on (a) satisfactory academic progress (b) department need and (c) *availability of funds* (Therefore, fifth-year funding is NOT guaranteed.) Current fourth year teaching assistants and Schomburg Fellows who submitted the Annual Teaching Interest Form will be considered first.

The criteria for selection include:

- academic performance; passing comprehensive exams.
- assessment of the dissertation topic on a competitive basis with others in the department and college;
- record of successful teaching and the ability to teach in areas of department need.
- projected professional growth and development of the TA.

The Graduate Committee, in consultation with the DGS will select applicants, when funding is available. Fifth year funding is always intended to aid curricular development, so students should think of areas in which they might be able to contribute courses that are likely to generate student demand and that are central to the mission of the Department and its programs.

## Outside Employment and Non-Department Assistantships

Students holding assistantships are required to take a full-time course load and normally will not have sufficient time for employment beyond assistantship responsibilities. Other students may find university employment through a work-study program administered by the office of the Vice President for Student Affairs. Some students may qualify for assistantships outside of the Department in certain specialized programs. Wherever feasible, qualified students are encouraged to apply for those positions. However, these positions are generally sought independently by interested students.

Advanced graduate students are encouraged to pursue opportunities for external grants and fellowships in aid of dissertation research, and to seek other means through which they may combine financial support for the latter stages of the program with activities useful in their dissertation research and appropriate to their long-term career interests. Notices of such opportunities can be posted or otherwise brought to students' attention; however, further initiatives normally lie with the individual student, <https://financialaid.buffalo.edu/graduate-students/>

## Financial Aid

U.S. citizens and permanent residents seeking financial aid counseling should contact the Office of Financial Aid at <https://financialaid.buffalo.edu/process/student-eligibility/>. Advisors may also be aware of the special needs of foreign students and be able to answer questions, so this service is open to all students.

Foreign applicants for admission should begin their pursuit of financial aid with academic departments or scholarship organizations in their own countries.

1. *The Fulbright Graduate Student Program (for foreign students)* <http://us.fulbrightonline.org/>
2. *Ford Foundation International Fellowships Program (for foreign students)* in the foundation's grants database at <https://www.iie.org/Programs/Ford-IFP-Legacy>
3. *The International Peace Scholarship (for foreign students)*. Grants are available to promote world peace and understanding for women who are citizens of any country other than the US or Canada. Usual deadline is December, grants up to \$5,000/year for up to 3 years. For application, write or call (515) 255-3153, International Peace Scholarship/PEO Fund Executive Office, 3700 Grand Avenue, Des Moines IA 50312-2899 also see <http://www.scholars4dev.com/category/field-of-study/peace-scholarships/>
4. *Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC): Doctoral Fellowships (for Canadian students)*. Annual awards to develop and expand the research skills of students at the doctoral level and to assist in the training of highly qualified personnel to meet Canada's current and future needs. Canadian citizens who have completed at least one previous degree at a Canadian university are eligible to apply for these fellowships, which provide up to 4 years of support. The application deadline is generally in November. <http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/programmes-programmes/fellowships-doctoral-doctorat-eng.aspx>

## Major Dissertation Support

*American Association of University Women Dissertation Fellowship.* AAUP Fellowships support women doctoral candidates completing dissertations, with women working on gender issues especially encouraged to apply. The American Association of University Women also awards International Dissertation Fellowships for full-time graduate research to women who are not U.S. citizens or permanent residents through \$20,000 annual fellowships. For additional information: <http://www.aauw.org/what-we-do/educational-funding-and-awards/>

- *The Charlotte W. Newcombe Fellowship.* Administered by Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, these grants provide fellowships of \$18,500 to persons writing dissertations that provide "original and significant study of ethical or religious values in all areas of human endeavor." Application deadlines tend to be early and the process is very competitive. <http://www.woodrow.org/newcombe/>
- *H.U.D. Dissertation Grants.* These are provided by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of University Partnerships through its Doctoral Dissertation Research Grant program. H.U.D. awards one-time grants of up to \$25,000 for a period of 24 months to doctoral candidates with approved prospectuses who are
- U.S. citizens or permanent residents enrolled at accredited institutions of higher education. These grants must be used to support direct costs incurred that support the timely completion of the dissertation. <https://www.hud.gov/programdescription/ddrg>
- *Santa Fe Institute.* The SFI's "Robustness" program provides partial support for grad students and postdocs working on projects relating to robustness of social processes. Typically the work is performed offsite from SFI (i.e., at the home institution), with the expectation that the student/postdoc will make regular visits to SFI. Contact person is Ms. Erica Jens ([erica@santafe.edu](mailto:erica@santafe.edu)). More generally, SFI writes: "From time to time, we have graduate students in residence for thesis or other research, typically after they have completed all course work. Some have come with their own financial support while others are supported from SFI sources. The main requirement is that the student be highly qualified and make a convincing case for a research residency at SFI; this includes finding a research sponsor among the scientists in residence here." Relevant areas include "economic and social interactions" (including work on persistent inequality), "evolutionary dynamics," "network dynamics," and "robustness."
- *National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GREP).* The purpose of the NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP) is to help ensure the vitality and diversity of the scientific and engineering workforce of the United States. The program recognizes and supports outstanding graduate students who are pursuing research-based master's and doctoral degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) or in STEM education. The GRFP provides three years of support for the graduate education of individuals who have demonstrated their potential for significant research achievements in STEM or STEM education. NSF especially encourages women, members of underrepresented minority groups, persons with disabilities, veterans, and undergraduate seniors to apply, [http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm\\_summ.jsp?pims\\_id=6201&org=NSF](http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=6201&org=NSF)
- For information on nationally competitive Ford Foundation Diversity Fellowships, please visit:
- <http://sites.nationalacademies.org/PGA/FordFellowships/index.htm>
- The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation/ACLS Early Career Fellowship Program provides support for young scholars to complete their dissertation and, later, to advance their research after being awarded the PhD. This program awards fellowships in two categories: Dissertation Completion

Fellowships and Recent Doctoral Recipients Fellowships. For more information, please visit:

<http://www.acls.org/grants/Default.aspx?id=510&linkidentifier=id&itemid=510;>

- For information on **other CLIR Awards and Fellowships**, please visit: <http://www.clir.org/fellowships>
- The Newberry Library in Chicago offers two short-term residential fellowships for scholars of American Indian heritage: The Power-Tanner Fellowship. The Power-Tanner Fellowship is for PhD candidates or postdoctoral scholars working in any field of the humanities and supports two months of research in the collections of the Newberry Library. For application details, please check <http://www.newberry.org/search/site/THE%20POWER-TANNER%20FELLOWSHIP>
- The Allen Fellowship. The Allen Fellowship provides from one to three months of research support for a woman of American Indian heritage working in any graduate or pre-professional field appropriate to the Newberry's collections. For application details, please check <http://www.newberry.org/search/site/allen%20fellowship>

### University Dissertation Support

When budgets permit, the College of Arts and Sciences provides a \$ 6,000 Dissertation Fellowship to exceptional students whose dissertation research is in the advanced stages. For more information on financial assistance for dissertations and graduate study consult:

<https://www.cas.buffalo.edu/graduate/current-graduate/fellowships-awards/>

Each year the Humanities Institute offers Advanced PhD Fellowships in support of graduate students with prospects of finishing their dissertations within the year. For information,

<http://humanitiesinstitute.buffalo.edu/opportunities/for-graduate-students/advanced-phd-fellowships/>

### Other Sources of Financial Support

Occasionally there are sources of financial support available outside the department, or from faculty members in the Department who hold active research grants.

You should consult the following websites for more information:

- *Graduate Student Association*  
<http://gsa.buffalo.edu/>  
(funding for a variety of graduate student activities, including conference travel, etc.)
- *Scholarships and Fellowships webpage (UB)*  
<https://grad.buffalo.edu/explore/funding/fellowships.html>
- *The Mark Diamond Research Fund (MDRF)*: Gives grants to graduate students for research expenses related to their thesis or dissertation. PhD students may apply for up to \$2,000 and Master's students for up to \$1,000. The MDRF grant is only for University at Buffalo graduate students in programs participating in the Graduate Student Association and who have not waived the student activity fee. Applicants should be in the latter stages of research.  
<https://ubwp.buffalo.edu/gsa/mdrf/>

## GENERAL ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

### Placement Files

Upon request placement files are sent out to prospective employers as a courtesy to our PhD students who have recently conferred their degree or are close to finishing their degree. Students who meet the criteria may obtain a copy of the Department's written procedures for placement files from the Graduate Coordinator. Any questions related to placement files should be directed to the Graduate Coordinator.

### Grievance Procedures

Under procedures established by the Department and the Graduate School, prompt and informal resolutions of grievances are sought. At the Department level, informal discussions between the disputants should resolve most issues; students may wish to seek prior advice from their Faculty Advisor, the DGS, or the Chair. If a formal review is necessary, a written statement of the grievance and grounds for it should be given to the Chair, who will act upon it in accordance with the By-laws of the Department and the regulations of the Graduate School. Appeals from departmental determinations may be lodged with the Divisional Grievance Committee of the College of Arts and Sciences.

The Graduate School's procedure governing the handling of grievances by graduate students can be found at:

<https://grad.buffalo.edu/succeed/current-students/policy-library.html?q=Grievance>

### Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment of employees and students, as defined below, is contrary to University policy and is a violation of federal and state laws and regulations.

Unwelcomed sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when: 1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment or academic advancement, 2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment or academic decisions affecting such individual, 3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or academic performance, or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.

No University employee of either sex shall impose a requirement of sexual cooperation as a condition of employment or academic advancement, or in any way contribute to or support unwelcomed physical or verbal sexual behavior. Any member of the University community who requires additional information, wishes to make a complaint or to receive a copy of the University procedures to be followed for complaints arising from matters related to the policies outlined above, should contact the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion located in 406 Capen Hall, at 645-2266 or through their website at <https://www.buffalo.edu/equity.html>

## Non-Discrimination, Diversity, and Reasonable Accommodation

The Department of Africana and American Studies adheres strictly to the University's policies of non-discrimination. These policies can be found on the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion website at: <https://www.buffalo.edu/equity.html>

The department embraces the belief that promoting and supporting diversity among its student body is a very worthy goal. We define diversity to encompass many characteristics including economic disadvantage, special talents, evidence of leadership qualities, race or ethnicity, a strong work record, and disability. A diverse student body enriches graduate education by providing a multiplicity of views and perspectives that enhances research, teaching, and the development of new knowledge. A diverse mix of students promotes respect for, and opportunities to learn from, others with the broad range of backgrounds and experiences that constitute modern society. The Department is therefore committed to providing equal access to educational opportunities through recruitment, admission, and support that promote diversity, and foster successful academic experiences.

Along with the larger University at Buffalo community, the Department of Africana and American Studies is committed to providing equal access to individuals with disabilities, including physical access to programs and reasonable accommodations for members of the University community.

## TA-Specific Administrative Matters

### TA Training

The University mandates departments to have some form of *formal* TA training program. Since TAs in this department are likely at some point to be asked to teach courses independently for the Department (see below), all TAs are required to enroll in the department's pedagogy course (AMS or AAS 568) in their first or subsequent semester (depending upon when the course has been scheduled).

Other students who may seek to teach in the Department (should an opportunity arise), or who intend to pursue an academic career, are also strongly encouraged to enroll in AMS or AAS 568.

### Independent TA-taught Courses

Senior TAs who have demonstrated proficiency in their teaching-related activities and who are making satisfactory progress in their doctoral programs (i.e., those who have passed their comprehensive examinations) will be invited, as an when opportunities arise, to teach their own courses for the department. Normally, these classes will be selected from a list of undergraduate courses that are regularly taught in the department, and for which there is demonstrated and consistent undergraduate student demand. All courses offered in the College are subject to enrollment *minima* that are strictly enforced by College administrators. The Department is not exempted from these minimum class size requirements. Moreover, an important factor in making these teaching assignments is whether the class addresses the curricular needs of the department. Only when this is the case will classes be likely to enroll the CAS minimum number of students. In addition, the TA must be qualified to teach the course (as demonstrated, for example, by virtue of their performance in related graduate coursework and by their passing the comprehensive examination in a related field). In the event that the course does not reach the College's minimum enrollment requirement (currently 21 students, though this number has been adjusted upwards in recent years), the course will be cancelled and the TA will be reassigned to other duties.

## General Principles for TA Assignments

Given the complicated process of scheduling in a large department like Africana and American Studies, it is worth reiterating the criteria used in making TA assignments.

- First, we are obligated by the university to assign TAs to large AMS GEN ED courses with over 200 students. Department policy also requires TA graders to be assigned to courses with more than 50 students enrolled.
- Second, except under specific circumstances, TAs who have passed their PhD exams or are in at least the second semester of their third year of TAship will be assigned to their own courses as instructors.
- TAs serving as instructors of their own courses are expected to adhere to University policy in the construction of their syllabus. For further information, see the TA Resources page (link is on the main Graduate Studies page) at our department website.
- In some circumstances, TAs may be assigned to their own sections prior to completing their exams or prior to the second semester of their third year in areas of curricular need within the department. In making such assignments, the scheduling committee considers the TAs preparation in the area of need and performance in all assignments to that point. The feedback we collect from instructors in large AMS sections of GEN ED courses which TAs serve as graders weighs heavily in decisions regarding assignments.

Where enrollments do not meet minimum thresholds established by the College of Arts & Sciences, courses scheduled to be taught by TAs are subject to cancellation (see above). In such cases, the TA will be reassigned to other duties.

- Though we do our best to make and announce assignments as early as possible, unexpected turnover among TAs will sometimes unavoidably result in the necessity of changing assignments involving either AMS GEN ED courses or grading positions.

TAs are encouraged to consult on a regular basis with the Director of Graduate Studies, the Supervisor of TAs, and their advisors to discuss your future assignments.

## Forms

The following forms are used by the department to document particular activities and milestones accomplished in programs of graduate study. Copies of these forms are available by contacting the Graduate coordinator.

1. Receipt of Graduate Handbook
2. Faculty Academic Advisor/Committee Members
3. Annual Graduate Student Status Update
4. Annual "Teaching Interest" Form
5. Comprehensive Exam Recommendations
6. Comprehensive Examination Fields/Bibliographies Approval Form
7. DGS Approval to Schedule Comprehensive Exam
8. Comprehensive Exam Results
9. Dissertation Proposal Defense
10. Approval to Schedule a Dissertation Defense
11. Independent Study/Directed Readings Approval
12. Petition for Approval of Course for Degree Credit to be Taken Outside