

Dissertation Guide

Under guidance from the doctoral committee, the candidate prepares a detailed research proposal that serves as the basis for the written dissertation covering an aspect of American Studies. The dissertation should represent a significant contribution to knowledge, show familiarity with the intellectual heritage of American Studies, be presented in a scholarly manner, reveal an ability on the part of the candidate to do independent research of high quality, and indicate considerable experience in using a variety of research techniques and forms of primary evidence (see <http://www.gradsch.psu.edu/current/thesis.html>). The contents and conclusions of the dissertation must be defended at the time of the final oral examination.

Once approved, the student can enroll in AM ST 600 Thesis for on-campus work or AM ST 610 Ph.D. Dissertation Research Off-Campus. The writing and defense of this original contribution to the theory and practice of American Studies is the capstone to the Ph.D. program. A student must be registered continuously for each Fall and Spring semester, beginning with the first semester after the comprehensive examination requirement and residency requirement have been met, until the dissertation is accepted and approved by the dissertation committee.

To maintain continuous registration, candidates may register for noncredit AM ST 601 or 611, with payment of the special thesis preparation fee; students who want to combine course work with thesis preparation must register for AM ST 600 or 611 (not 601 which is full-time thesis preparation) plus course registration at the regular per-credit fee. For more information on academic procedures, see http://bulletins.psu.edu/bulletins/whitebook/academic_procedures.cfm.

The final examination of the doctoral candidate is an oral examination (defense) administered and evaluated by the entire doctoral committee. This oral defense is open to the public and related in large part to the dissertation, but it may cover the candidate's whole program of study. The Committee may restrict part of the defense to its members and the candidate. The candidate must be registered as a full-time or part-time degree student for the semester in which the oral defense is held.