

American Studies Ph.D. Comprehensive Examinations (June 2017)

Overview of process leading to doctoral candidacy:

- All doctoral students will take AMST 700 History and Practices of American Studies and AMST 701 Research Methods in American Studies during their first year. Successful completion of these courses, including a final major paper or project, will be considered to demonstrate sufficient grasp of shared core ideas and methodologies in the field of American Studies.
- Each student will constitute an examination committee of three members (no more than one of whom may be from outside the department). With the help of these advisors, each student will choose three areas of concentration with an eye not only to immediate research interests but also to building their careers long term. Each member of the examination committee will advise the student in assembling and studying a list of materials in one of these areas of concentration. The student will complete a professional portfolio in one of these areas and a three-hour written examination covering the other two.
- Students should have passed their comprehensive examinations, devised and defended the dissertation prospectus, and advanced to candidacy by the end of the second academic year after entering the program for those who began with an MA, third academic year for those who began with a BA.

Consult the **American Studies PhD Timeline and Requirements** document for detailed instructions and timeline for selecting areas of concentration and constituting the student's comprehensive examination committee.

Comprehensive Examinations—Scheduling and Structure:

- *These events take place during the second year for those who enter with an MA, third year for those who enter with a BA.*
- Fall semester: Students enroll in AMST 902 PhD Research Seminar in which each student, in consultation with the professor teaching AMST 902 and the members of their examination committee, works on the professional portfolio and a brief (roughly 500-word) preliminary dissertation proposal.
- November (no later than first Friday in November): Each student submits the preliminary dissertation proposal (500 words) to the five dissertation committee members, to members of the student's comprehensive examination committee who will not serve on the dissertation committee (if any), and to the Director of Graduate Studies and posts the proposal on the AMST PhD Dissertation Prospectus Sakai site.
- December (by the last day of classes):
 - Students complete the professional portfolio that they have been working on in AMST 902 and submit it to the three members of the examination committee. At this time the student should consult with the examination committee members in order to schedule the oral

examination (within two weeks after the written examination—see timing below) and reserve a room for the oral examination.

- January:
 - The examination committee chair reminds the two committee members who advise the student on the areas of concentration to be covered by examination (rather than portfolio) to draw up two questions each. The scope of each question should be calibrated to the expectation that the examination will be closed book and that the student will take no more than one and a half hours to write the response.
- February:
 - By the first Monday—the examination committee chair is responsible for constituting the examination (two questions each from two committee members) and for forwarding the examination to the Director of Graduate Studies.
 - The Director of Graduate Studies will make the examinations available on the AMST PhD Comps Sakai site. They will become visible to the student at 8 am on Wednesday.
 - First Wednesday after the first Monday—the student undertakes the written examination covering the two areas of concentration other than the area upon which they focused the portfolio.
 - Each student may take the exam during any three-hour period convenient for them during the appointed day (8 am to 8 am) and at a place of their own choosing. *The examination is closed book.*
 - The student will pick one of the two questions on each area of concentration and will spend one and a half hours composing an essay in response, three hours total for the examination, with reasonable time for a break between questions.
 - When the students have completed their examination responses, they should email these to the Director of Graduate Studies who will be responsible for distributing them to all three examination committee members.
 - Within two weeks after written exams—the three members of the examination committee will assemble with the student for an hour-and-a-half-long oral examination involving further discussion of the portfolio, the written exam, and the brief dissertation proposal.
 - At the orals, the examination committee chair signs parts I and II of the Doctoral Exam Report form: <http://gradschool.unc.edu/pdf/wdexam.pdf>. The student is then responsible for conveying the form to the Graduate Student Services Specialist, who will keep it in the student's file. (Parts III and IV will be signed by the full dissertation committee at the time of the dissertation defense and dissertation submission.)