

## **Incoming Student Guide (June 2017)**

American Studies PhD and Folklore MA Programs  
Department of American Studies, UNC Chapel Hill

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### **Websites to bookmark:**

UNC Graduate School: <http://gradschool.unc.edu/>  
The Graduate School Handbook: <http://handbook.unc.edu/>  
Department of American Studies: <http://americanstudies.unc.edu/>  
American Studies Graduate Policies and Requirements page:  
<http://americanstudies.unc.edu/procedures/graduate-policies-and-requirements/>

Welcome to the Department of American Studies! In the months leading up to classes and over the next year, there will be several things that you will need to take care of in order to get yourself established at the University and ready for classes to begin.

This guide is meant to walk you through the various administrative procedures of registration, tuition, TA assignments, in-state residency, and health insurance in roughly the order in which you will need to address them and to make you aware of things it should help to know about before the first day of classes. Please read this guide carefully and return to it as you are dealing with each step. The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) and the Graduate Student Services Specialist (GSSS) are always happy to help clear up any remaining questions.

Over the summer you will periodically receive important and sometimes time-sensitive updates from the Graduate Student Services Specialist, the Director of Graduate Studies, the Business Services Specialist, and possibly the Business Officer. All of these will be sent to your UNC email address, so please be sure to set that up as soon as possible (see details below) and to check it frequently.

Department Staff: Ms. Washington manages the entire department; Ms. Siler-Jones handles employment and supervises Ms. Brinson; Ms. Brinson handles enrollment, insurance, and graduate student records; Ms. Whitney is the Office Manager and handles office assignments and key disbursement. The Department of American Studies and the much larger Department of English and Comparative Literature are joined as an “integrated business unit,” so these staff members are taking care of the hundreds of DOECL faculty and graduate students as well as our 16 American Studies and Folklore faculty members and 30 or so graduate students.

In this document we try to explain in simple terms some of the arcane or bureaucratic details of the procedures we need you to go through. *If you receive somewhat different instructions from Ms. Brinson, Ms. Siler-Jones, Ms. Washington, or Ms. Whitney, remember that*

*they are the experts and the conduits to you from other branches of the university. Assume that they have updated information and follow their instructions.*

**Topics:**

- **Getting registered/official with the University (transcripts, email)**
- **Graduate School Orientation**
- **Department Orientation and TA Orientation**
- **Registering for Fall Courses**
- **Interinstitutional Registration**
- **Language Requirement**
- **Funding and Tuition**
- **In-State Residency and Tuition**
- **TA Assignments**
- **Health Insurance**
- **Offices and Library Carrels**
- **ITS, HELP, CCI, Printing**
- **Mail and Copying**
- **Transportation and Parking**

**Getting yourself registered/official with the university**

- As part of the admission offer, the Graduate School likely sent you a link to this page of instructions for admitted students:  
<http://gradschool.unc.edu/admissions/admittedstudents.html>. Please take a look and make sure you are working your way through all the things we need you to do before Fall.
- The first step is to get all your official transcripts sent to the Graduate School directly from all the colleges or universities you have attended. The Graduate School requires this before you can start to register for courses. If you cannot obtain a final transcript over the summer (e.g., if you are earning an MA that will not be awarded until August), let the DGS know and we can arrange permission for a delay. Aim to be signed up for Fall courses by mid-June.
- The Graduate School instructions will explain how to create an ONYEN (“only name you’ll ever need”) and to set up a UNC email address. *Once you know your UNC email address (likely your ONYEN plus @ad.unc.edu) please send it to the DGS and to the Graduate Student Services Specialist and start checking it.* We will use that email address to send you crucial information over the summer. Once you are here, the University insists we use the UNC address for any kind of official communication, and you’ll need to use it for communicating with your students if you are a TA.
- Please also make note of your PID (personal identification number). You were actually assigned this when you applied to UNC and it will appear on your ID card and in ConnectCarolina. If you need help from the GSSS to sign up for courses, she will need your PID.
- During the week before classes start you can pick up your One Card (university ID card) <http://onecard.unc.edu> The office is on the third floor of the Student Stores building.

## **Graduate School Orientation**

- The Graduate School should contact you directly about the orientations they offer for incoming graduate students, usually on the Thursday before Fall classes begin. We definitely recommend that you plan to attend.

## **Department Orientation and TA Orientation**

- The department holds an orientation for incoming graduate students on the Monday morning before classes begin. You'll hear from the DGS later in the summer about details, but pencil in 9 am to 1 pm that day.
- For those who will serve as TAs, the department holds three training sessions each year. The first will usually be on the Friday before classes begin. These are mandatory for those serving as TAs in a given year and recommended for those who will serve in future years. You'll hear from the Associate Chair later in the summer about details.

## **Registering for Fall Courses**

- The courses being offered by the department each semester are listed on the website <http://americanstudies.unc.edu/courses/course-offerings-by-semester/> (Note that those called AMST are listed first, and then our Cherokee language offerings CHER, then FOLK.) To look for courses in other departments, check their websites (note alphabetical listing linked at the top of the main UNC web page) or log into ConnectCarolina and search by department. For Duke and NC state, check department websites.
- All Folklore students will take FOLK 850 Approaches to Folklore Theory. (FOLK 860 The Art of Ethnography instead in Fall 2017 only.)
- All American Studies students will take AMST 700 History and Practices of American Studies.
- You'll also take at least one other course within the department plus possibly one in another department or even at Duke (see instructions for Interinstitutional Registration below). Total: three 3-hour courses. (Note for Folklore students: You usually take at least one additional course offered by the core Folklore faculty—Berlinger, M. Ferris, W. Ferris, Herman, Hinson, Neal, Sawin—these may be listed as AMST or FOLK. Neal's courses are usually MUSC.)
- Reach out to your preliminary advisor and/or the DGS for advice about which two additional courses to take.
- Graduate students may take for credit any course numbered 400 or higher. Courses above 700 are for grad students only. Sometimes 400 or 500 level courses have lots of undergrads and only a few graduate students, but can nevertheless be interesting and provide a valuable break from intense seminars. Sometimes they only have a few students and you may find that the undergrads are highly engaged and impressive interlocutors. So don't shy away from a 400. Talk to the instructor in advance or early in the semester. Often they'll ask you to write somewhat longer papers or work out other plans with you to make the course productive for you as a graduate student.
- Access registration through the ConnectCarolina Student Center, where you can search and enroll online, accessible from the UNC home page, <https://connectcarolina.unc.edu/> If you see a class in the department listing but can't find it via ConnectCarolina's search feature, make sure that the option to only see open classes is not selected. Even if a

course has filled up, you will often be able to speak to the professor and have them add you to the class. Professors in our department recognize that incoming graduate students are enrolling later than the rest of the school, and they will make room for you if possible.

- Think ahead—get advice from your advisor and consider which courses will and will not be offered again during your years here; some are offered only every other year. (Your advisor may know, or ask the professor or the DGS.) Also think about taking classes this fall or at least next spring with professors you may want to invite to be part of your thesis or dissertation committee. Trying to do all these things at once is hard, but do keep them in mind. If you're having trouble balancing which to prioritize, ask the DGS or your preliminary advisors.
- Remember that it's possible to visit additional courses during the first week of classes and make changes then if you discover something that is a better fit for your interests. The official drop-add deadline is one week after the beginning of classes.
- *Your first year and every year please be absolutely sure to have signed up for at least one course by June 30.* The Registrar issues Fall tuition bills in early- to mid-July. If you have a TA-ship or fellowship that covers your tuition you'll still receive a bill; follow the instructions to waive payment. As long as you are signed up for at least one class, you can continue to add or change courses after those bills are issued. If, however, you are not signed up for some courses when those bills are issued and you try to enroll later in the summer, the Registrar will demand full payment up front. There is a way for the GSSS to work around this, but it is troublesome and time consuming. Please don't make her have to do it.

### **Interinstitutional Registration**

UNC has an arrangement with Duke, NC State, and other local universities that allows you to take courses there without extra charge: <http://registrar.unc.edu/guide/special-enrollments/inter-institutional-programs/> Our students most often use this provision to take a course at Duke's Center for Documentary Studies <https://documentarystudies.duke.edu/>, but you might also find a seminar in another department or at another sister university that is perfect for your interests. It usually makes sense to wait until your second or third semester before taking a course at other schools, since it's important, too, to get to know the faculty in our department and elsewhere at UNC, but it may be an option and the DGS may make you aware of special opportunities.

The process works like this:

- Contact the professor and get their permission. Ideally they should be able to provide you with a permission number that you can fill in on the form.
- Fill in the form [http://registrar.unc.edu/files/2012/03/CCM1\\_042585.pdf](http://registrar.unc.edu/files/2012/03/CCM1_042585.pdf) and mail or email it to the DGS along with the email from the professor saying they are happy to have you in the class and a paragraph explaining why you want to take that course (good to mention why there's nothing at UNC that fills the need)
- The DGS signs the form; the Graduate Student Services Specialist keeps a copy along with your justification paragraph, and we send the form along to the Graduate School, where someone signs and sends it on to the Registrar. The whole process takes a little while, but eventually the course shows up in ConnectCarolina.
- Once the course meets, we ask you to send a copy of the syllabus to the GSSS so we can keep it on file.

- Your grade also shows up in ConnectCarolina and on your UNC transcript.

### **Language Requirement**

The department requires all students to demonstrate competence in a language other than English as a condition of the degree. It's a good idea to look now at the language policy (posted on the Graduate Policies and Requirements page) and to plan ahead for how you will fulfill it. If you simply need to brush up on a language you have already studied in order to take one of the FLPA (Foreign Language Proficiency Assessment) exams, you might want to do that over the summer.

### **Funding and Tuition**

For those who have fellowships, merit assistantships, or TA-ships at some point in your years of study, the university and/or department provides support in some or all of five categories:

- Stipend
- The in-state portion of your tuition
- The out-of-state portion of your tuition
- Health insurance
- Fees (crucially NOT covered for TAs)

Here's the schedule of tuition and fees: <http://cashier.unc.edu/tuition-fees/> to remind you about costs, even though you don't usually pay most of them.

It is crucial for you to be enrolled "full-time" in order to qualify as a TA or fellow and to receive the attendant tuition and health insurance benefits. For most semesters for most people this means you will take nine hours. In your last semester for the Folklore MA and last year or two for the American Studies PhD you just need to sign up for three hours of thesis (FOLK 993) or dissertation (AMST 994) to be considered enrolled full-time.

If you have a fellowship or merit assistantship:

- all five categories above are covered for you, mostly by funds administered by the Fellowship office of the Graduate School. Your student fees are covered.

If you have a TA-ship:

- The department pays your stipend from Instructional Budget.
- The Graduate School pays the in-state portion of your tuition as part of your compensation for contributing to undergraduate education.
- The department expends some of the Tuition Remission funds allotted to us by the Graduate School to cover the out-of-state portion of your tuition until you qualify for NC residency for tuition purposes (More on this below).
- The department covers the premiums for your "RA and TA Blue" or "GSHIP" health insurance policy (More on this below).
- You, however, are responsible for paying your own fees. You may pay them all in one lump sum or arrange to have them deducted in installments from your stipend check. The GSSS will write to you over the summer with instructions that you need to follow if you prefer the payroll deduction option. *You must request the payroll deduction option every semester, you will need to send the form with an original signature (not a scanned*

*version), and the deadline is absolute (if you miss it, you'll have to pony up the full amount), so please look for the email from the GSSS and follow her instructions.*

TAs will receive a contract from the Business Services Coordinator in mid-summer. It will specify your Fall TA assignment. Your Spring assignment will be worked out later in the Fall. Please be sure to read the contract details and to sign and return the portion you're asked to return.

Your stipend (TA-ship or fellowship) will be paid in ten installments: a half-month's pay at the end of August and May, a full month's pay at the end of September through April. The university does take out taxes, even though in many cases once you file your income tax returns in the Spring you'll get a refund.

Please note that the department does not pay your tuition until the official university enrollment reporting date or census date, which is about three weeks after the beginning of classes (roughly September 6 for Fall and January 25 for Spring). The logic here is that students may be changing plans or adding and dropping courses, and the department does not want to pay for too many or too few hours. Up until the date when the department pays your tuition, even though you have deferred payment, the computer in the Cashier's Office shows that you owe the university money. This means that if other funds come into your university account from a student loan or certain kinds of top-up grants, the Cashier will apply those funds against what you (apparently) owe. As soon as the department pays your tuition you'll get that money refunded to you, but you may not have it available right away. If you must have those funds sooner, talk to the GSSS and she may be able to accelerate payment of your tuition so those funds can be freed up.

### **In-State Residency and Tuition**

The department has limited funds for paying the out-of-state portion of TAs' tuition, so we count on all of you who can likely qualify for "North Carolina Residency for Tuition Purposes" to prepare for and then apply to try to attain that status.

The Graduate School provides detailed explanations and instructions here: <http://gradschool.unc.edu/studentlife/resources/residency/> Please read through these now and have a look at the application to get a sense of the kinds of documentation you'll need. Toward the bottom of a long page there is a link to a PowerPoint that hits the crucial elements.

If you have already lived in North Carolina for a year or more, please go ahead and apply over the summer. The system should be open starting June 1.

International students cannot qualify, so you do not need to make the attempt.

For new students arriving from out of state, the crucial thing to keep in mind is that you won't apply (and, we hope, qualify) until **summer of the following year** (beginning of your second year in the program). However, *in order to qualify you will need to have done a variety of things to demonstrate your intention to have North Carolina be your "domicile" A FULL YEAR BEFORE THE BEGINNING OF CLASSES FOR THE FALL OF YOUR SECOND YEAR, that is, by mid-August in your FIRST YEAR.*

A few things to keep in mind:

- We'll talk about this more at the graduate orientation, but *it's crucial to get as much done before school starts as possible*.
- The system is mandated by the state to involve a judgment on the preponderance of the evidence. You cannot just check off a certain number or qualifying activities and be guaranteed to get in. Nerve-wracking, but not under our control.
- The application asks you to demonstrate that you plan to make North Carolina your home indefinitely. "Indefinitely" is not the same as forever, but you do need NOT to suggest either: a) that you are treating some other place as home by going back there every time you get a break from school or b) that you'll rush off to some other place the instant you graduate (e.g., if you are in the MA program and hope to go on to a PhD program in another state or if you've always dreamed of taking up a job somewhere else after finishing your degree, you would be wise not to mention this in your application).
- Make plans to get your North Carolina driver's license (which may take time—the lines can be long) AND register to vote at the Driver's License Bureau AND register your car (which may involve paying state tax or even getting your parents to sell you the car for a few \$\$ if they own it) in NC before school starts. Driver's license and car license offices are not in the same place. Driver's license <https://www.ncdot.gov/dmv/driver/>; auto registration <http://www.dmv.org/nc-north-carolina/car-registration.php>
- For many of you, the easiest order of operations may be to first make sure you have insurance under your name and a local address, then apply for a NC driver's license (they may ask to see proof of insurance under your name and local address), then register to vote, then make any necessary transfers of title, and finally register your vehicle in-state.
- Yes, it really is essential to do these things before classes start. We've had students denied in-state status because, for example, they just didn't have time to get to the Driver's License Bureau the week before classes or couldn't get the car title transferred into their name until they visited parents over Fall Break. Please plan ahead and make time.

If you do not qualify next Fall, you can apply again in the Spring. If we run out of tuition remission funds the DGS appeals to the Graduate School for more. So far they have always provided the amount we needed, but that's not an absolute guarantee. Every person who qualifies frees up funds to cover someone who is new to the state or cannot qualify, so we count on you to make this a priority.

### **Teaching Assistantships**

Most students will serve as TAs during all or part of your studies. Sometimes you will work in a large course with discussion sections (usually two sections of 20 students each per TA), sometimes you will help in a smaller course with intensive ethnographic or other research assignments. See the Graduate Policies and Requirements page for details of the TA assignment procedure. If you will be a TA, please pick and register for your Fall courses by mid-June or even earlier. The DGS needs to know what you are taking so we can assign you to a TA-ship that

does not conflict. A TA-ship is considered a 15-hour-a-week commitment, although some weeks may demand less time, some more. Please note that if you are offered other opportunities to work on campus, these should be for no more than an additional 5 hours per week. The Graduate School will occasionally waive the no-more-than-20-hours-a-week rule for some remarkable opportunity that contributes to your educational experience. But be sure to consult with the DGS (who will talk with the Graduate School) and with the Business Services Manager. If you exceed a certain percentage of FTE (full time employee) you can actually lose your GSHIP insurance, so be careful.

## Health Insurance

Over the course of the summer the GSSS will send out official notices about the health insurance that the university provides to TAs and students with fellowships. Please pay attention and take the requested action before the due dates. However, questions sometimes arise, and the official notices can sometimes be confusing. This is how it works.

- The University requires all students, undergraduate and graduate, to have health insurance.
- If you have your own insurance that you pay for and want to keep, that's fine. If you have a TA-ship, merit assistantship, or fellowship you'll get university insurance on top of this.
- If you serve as a TA or have a merit assistantship or fellowship, the department or Graduate School pays for you to be enrolled in the Blue Cross/Blue Shield Student Blue RA & TA insurance, also called GSHIP (Graduate Student Health Insurance Program): <https://campushealth.unc.edu/charges-insurance/student-blue-ra-ta-and-postdoc-insurance>; <https://www.bcbsnc.com/content/studentblue/uncch-ta/index.htm?page=welcome>
- This insurance becomes effective August 1. For continuing students it remains in effect until July 31. For those who graduate, it lasts until the end of May.
- In order to be sure every student is covered, the university also by default enrolls every student in a different program (aimed primarily at the undergraduates) called Student Blue insurance: <https://www.bcbsnc.com/content/studentblue/uncch/index.htm> *unless you opt out*. If you are not serving as a TA, you may indeed want this instead of or in addition to whatever other insurance you have. If you keep it you *will* be charged for it.
- Different parts of the system do not communicate with each other, so the system does not know when you are getting the GSHIP insurance provided by the university. So those who are TAs, merit assistants, or fellows will (shortly after the beginning of the fall semester) have to opt out of the "Student Blue" insurance (because you have "Student Blue RA & TA" insurance, aka GSHIP.) *If you fail to opt out you will be charged for the additional insurance even though you don't need it.*
- Here's information on the "hard waiver" process: <https://campushealth.unc.edu/charges-insurance/mandatory-student-health-insurance>
- Enrolled students can get health care at Student Health Services—that's part of what is covered by your student fees—but you don't have to. Your GSHIP insurance will pay for other physicians, including specialists, as well. Please note, however, that if you want to be seen at SHS over the summer you have to pay an additional fee, so plan accordingly.

Again, don't worry about this until you receive more information and instructions from the GSSS as the summer goes on. By the time you need to submit your waiver, you will have information about the GSHIP insurance that you will need to use in order to complete the on-line waiver form.

### **Offices and Library Carrels**

Students who are serving as TAs will be assigned an office that you will share with two or three other TAs. This may be in Greenlaw, Dey, or Swain Hall. You may share only with others in our department or with DOECL students as well. You will get your office assignment from our Office Manager right before classes begin and can pick up keys from her in Greenlaw 204. Office space is very tight, so students in American Studies and Folklore (and also in English and Comparative Literature, with whom we share buildings) have historically *only* had an office during semesters when they are teaching. This means that those with fellowships, those who work for another unit on campus like the Ackland Museum, Southern Oral History Program, or Writing Center, or who later get non-service funding like a Dissertation Completion Grant have not had office space. However, as long as you serve as a TA continuously you should be able to stay in the same office year to year, except in extraordinary circumstances, and the department is working to try to secure additional office space.

Davis Library (the central research library) has some library carrels and also study desks where you can lock up and store library books (after you have checked them out). Ask at the circulation desk: <http://library.unc.edu/davis/graduatecarrels/>

### **ITS, HELP, CCI, Printing, Mail, Copying**

ITS (Information Technology Service) provides assistance with most technical issues (email, Sakai, wifi): on-line <https://help.unc.edu/> or by phone 919-962-HELP. They also staff walk-in computer support offices, the closest is in the basement of the House Undergraduate Library <https://help.unc.edu/help/where-is-the-itrc-and-what-are-its-walk-in-support-hours/>

CCI (Carolina Computing Initiative) sells laptop computers and accessories to students <http://cci.unc.edu/> and maintains printers all over campus that you can use to print papers <http://cci.unc.edu/new-students/cci-printing/> Each graduate student receives an allotment of \$40 to pay for printing each semester.

Note that libraries have photocopiers (for which you pay with your OneCard) and scanners (for free—bring a memory stick to save the files) if you want to make copies of non-digital library materials.

### **Mail and Copying**

All graduate students have a mail cubby in the Bain Staff Room, 219 Greenlaw. Please check it periodically. This room also houses copiers that TAs and faculty members use for class materials (not personal copying). Anyone may use the scanning function which will email a pdf direct to your UNC address.

### **Transportation and Parking**

This page summarizes transit options: <http://move.unc.edu/transit/>

The university and town go in together to make the city buses free in Chapel Hill and Carrboro. <http://www.townofchapelhill.org/town-hall/departments-services/transit/routes-schedules/all-routes-schedules>

Campus buses (U and RU circulators) are also free.

Point to Point (P2P) helps with special situations, including getting you back to your car after dark: <http://move.unc.edu/p2p/>

Parking on campus is scarce, so it's wise to choose where you live in order to be able to use the buses or bike to campus. You can park in many lots campus in the evenings, and there are Park and Ride lots that connect with city buses. See details:

<http://gradschool.unc.edu/studentlife/guide/transportation.html>

It's also possible to buy a permit for a lot at the edge of campus from which you can take the free university bus in. *There is a lottery in late June for student spots in closer-in parking lots*

<http://move.unc.edu/parking/student-parking/>