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PhD in American Studies

The Department of American Studies at Brown University undertakes the interdisciplinary and transnational study, analysis, and presentation of the diverse cultures, groups, and experiences that make up American life. One of the oldest American Studies programs in the nation, its graduate students and faculty represent a community of innovative and publicly engaged scholars committed to defining new directions in research and teaching.

The primary goal of the PhD program in American Studies is to train students to become knowledgeable, engaged, and productive scholars within and beyond the academy. Graduates of the department now teach in a range of college and university departments including history, English, women's studies, ethnic studies, urban studies, environmental studies, communications, and American Studies, as well as hold jobs in archives, museums, historical societies, and other cultural institutions.

The PhD program includes:

- Coursework including two required courses
- Preliminary Examinations in three fields
- Teaching as a Teaching Assistant and Teaching Fellow
- Dissertation Proposal
- Dissertation

Important Dates

March, Year 1

Students pursuing MA in American Studies with 8 credits or more file for graduation.

March, Year 2

Students pursuing MA in American Studies or another program with less than 8 credits in Year 1 file for graduation.

May 15, Year 2 (or near the end of semester 4)

Deadline to submit field proposal materials to the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS)

December 1, Year 3

Submit AMST 0190 Course Syllabus to the Scheduling Officer and DGS for review indicating the year you will be a Teaching Fellow (year 4 or 5)

March, Year 3

Complete preliminary exams before Spring break.

May, Year 3

Submit approved dissertation proposal, signed by a faculty committee of three, to the DGS by Commencement Weekend.

Course Requirements

The Ph.D. program in American Studies provides students with rigorous training in the frameworks and methods of interdisciplinary work while allowing them the freedom to develop and follow their own academic interests and goals. Graduate students design their own course of study within the guidelines set up by the department, working with the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) and faculty in American Studies and across the University.

Our students must complete 22 credits (as well as preliminary exams and a dissertation proposal) to advance to doctoral candidacy. These comprise 11 seminars, 2 advising independent studies, and 9 exam-related independent studies. Generally, during their first year students take six seminar courses and two advising independent study courses with the DGS. In the second year, students take five seminars and three preliminary exam independent studies with likely exam advisors. In the third year, students take six exam preparation independent studies as they prepare for and take their preliminary exams and write their dissertation proposals, one with each exam advisor each semester.

Note that the Graduate School requires 24 “tuition units” in residence; these accumulate at a rate of 4 units/semester as long as a student is engaged in full-time study (registered for 3 or more course credits per semester). Thus, the residency requirement is typically completed after six semesters. However, teaching commitments will entail residency past this point.

Typical First Three Years of Study

Year 1 Fall	Year 1 Spring	Year 2 Fall	Year 2 Spring	Year 3 Fall	Year 3 Spring
AMST 2010	Seminar	AMST 2520	Seminar	Exam Reading (Independent study with exam advisor)	Exam Reading (Independent study with exam advisor)
Seminar	Seminar	Seminar	Seminar	Exam Reading (Independent study with exam advisor)	Exam Reading (Independent study with exam advisor)
Seminar	Seminar	Seminar	Preliminary Exam Lists and Essays (Independent study with exam advisor)	Exam Reading (Independent study with exam advisor)	Exam Reading (Independent study with exam advisor)
Advising (Independent study with the DA)	Advising (Independent study with the DA)	Preliminary Exam Lists and Essays (Independent study with exam advisor)	Preliminary Exam Lists and Essays (Independent study with exam advisor)		

Two Required Seminars:

AMST 2010: (usually taken Fall Year 1)

Students will be introduced to models of interdisciplinary scholarship that comprise the field of American Studies. By interacting with a variety of disciplines and methods, students build dynamic new approaches to their topics of study. The instructor of AMST 2010, a member of the faculty appointed in the Department of American Studies, will draw from their own research specialty in their framing of the field and may take into account the interests of first-year students when designing the course.

AMST 2520: (usually taken Fall Year 2)

Students learn the contours of the field of American Studies, interdisciplinary pedagogy, and begin the conceptualization of their own intellectual interests as they develop their preliminary exam lists and overview essay and prepare a draft of a syllabus. The syllabus will be submitted as part of the preliminary exam process and used as the basis for a course that students may teach in their fourth or fifth year.

Nine Elective Seminars:

(usually five in Year 1 and four in Year 2)

Taken around the university, most seminars will feature small groups of students discussing texts, so PhD students can hone reading, writing, discussion, and analytical skills as well as understand the methods, historiography, and content of their fields. Other seminars might focus on proficiencies needed as students enter the academy or public humanities, including language, digital, or publication skills. At the end of these nine seminars, students should have written at least three papers or prepared public projects (or a combination of the two) that could be revised for conference presentation, journal publication, or inclusion in a dissertation. Students should consider how these papers/projects contribute to their development as scholars.

Two Advising Independent Studies (AMST 2920):

(taken in Year 1, one each semester)

Taken with the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), these courses represent the individual and group advising done by the DGS with the first-year students, in which students receive guidance on course selection that will result in the preparation of at least three papers or projects; departmental expectations; professionalization; possible preliminary examination fields and advisors; preparation of summer reading to narrow exam fields; and ultimately choosing a dissertation topic and dissertation advisors.

*Nine Exam-Related Independent Studies (*AMST 292X):*

*each faculty member gets a different course number when signing up for multiple AMST 292Xs (three in Year 2, six in Year 3)

Taken with preliminary exam committee advisors, these courses each include a schedule of meetings, agreed on by the student and the faculty members. They are designed to prepare the student to take examinations and write a dissertation proposal. Preliminary exam preparation courses in the second year, when students are still taking seminars and T.A.ing for the first time, carry a lighter load focused on the development of reading lists and field essays. Students can expect to meet 3-5 times with each faculty advisor. Courses in the third year taken with exam advisors entail intensive reading and other preparation for the exam and writing of the dissertation prospectus. Students can expect to meet with their advisors more frequently.

Language Study

The department encourages students to gain or maintain expertise in more than one language. Students should note that language courses cannot be taken for graduate level credit. This means students pursuing language study are expected to do so as an overload. Those beginning a new language necessary for their scholarly work will need to spend at least one summer studying that language. Students are encouraged to take advantage of funding opportunities available through the Graduate School in addition to external funding to support their language study.

Appointments

Students are supported through the following appointments:

Year 1 – Fellowship

Year 2 – Teaching Assistantship

Year 3 - Teaching Assistantship

Year 4 – Dissertation Fellowship or Teaching Assistantship/Fellowship (a Teaching Fellow is lead instructor of their own course)

Year 5 – Dissertation Fellowship or Teaching Assistantship/Fellowship (opposite of previous year)

Year 6 – One semester of Fellowship and one semester of Teaching Assistantship

External and Internal funding and internal funding may affect appointments.

Transitional Master's Degree and Certificate Programs

Brown University PhD students receive a Master of Arts on the way to the PhD.

American Studies students choose either the MA in American Studies or apply to another MA through Brown's Open Graduate Education Program.

MA in American Studies

Students will receive an MA in American Studies after passing eight courses, usually at the end of Year 1. In anticipation of good progress toward the degree, students should file petitions with the Graduate School in March to receive the degree at Commencement in May. Those who don't complete eight courses in the first year may petition in March of Year 2 to receive their MA at the end of Year 2.

Doctoral Certificate

Doctoral certificate programs are open to enrolled PhD students. These programs are designed to extend expertise into interdisciplinary areas and to certify training beyond the home PhD discipline.

To pursue a certificate programs, students must discuss the possibility with the Director of Graduate Studies to ascertain departmental support. Certificates typically require three to five courses and sometimes require a substantial piece of written work, internship, practicum, or other project. Required courses may also count toward elective seminar requirements in American Studies depending on certificate requirements.

Our PhD students have pursued doctoral certificates in fields such as Gender and Sexuality Studies and Science, Technology and Society, among others.

Preliminary Exams

The preliminary examination process in American Studies trains students to become confident scholars/teachers able to present their ideas as part of a course design and as the beginnings of a scholarly project. The examinations require students to:

- Gain a broad overview of three fields of study enabling them to teach introductory courses in one or more University departments or interdisciplinary programs
- Demonstrate an understanding of the state of scholarship in their fields, identifying potential models for their own work and possible dissertation topics
- Prepare a syllabus to show readiness for independent teaching
- Present a pre-proposal for a dissertation.

Exams are conducted orally and may last up to 2.5 hours (more details on page 10).

Schedule to Preliminary Exams

Year 1: Students will work with the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) to consider their courses in light of possible fields and dissertation topics. The DGS will help students plan summer reading to help narrow in on exam topics and likely advisors.

Summer: Begin conceiving three fields. Determine faculty advisor for first preliminary exam-related independent study.

Year 2, First Semester: Students take one exam-related independent study course with a presumed preliminary exam advisor to determine the format for building an exam list, compile an exam list, and finalize one field essay. Faculty advisors may or may not ask students to read in the preparation of these lists. The independent study, however, is meant to be distinct to those that happen in the third year, especially in terms of meeting times. In AMST2520, students will workshop an overview essay presenting their field questions and beginning books, as well as draft a syllabus. Two elective seminars will aid in the development of exam field areas.

Second Semester: Students take two exam-related independent study courses with exam advisors to develop the remaining two field essays and exam lists. Two elective seminars taken this semester should support field preparation either by beginning reading in designated fields or by helping the building of lists. By May 15 (or near the end of a student's 4th semester), students will present to the DGS the following:

- Three field essays laying out important questions
- Three field lists corresponding with the field essays (see options below)
- Three signed cover sheets for each list and essay pair
- One overview essay explaining how the three fields fit together and how they help prepare students for teaching and research

Students should expect to begin reading for their exams the summer between their second and third years.

Year 3, First Semester: Students will enroll in an independent study course with each of their three exam advisors and dedicate the semester to preparing for the exam. This may include reading, writing, exhibition attendance and other related tasks as determined by the faculty advisor. Student reading schedules may favor one list over the other across the semester despite being registered for three independent studies.

Second Semester: Students will enroll in an independent study with each of their exam advisors, complete the preliminary exam, and write a dissertation proposal. Students should keep in mind the following scheduling requirements:

- One week before the exam, students will send their exam committee a copy of their undergraduate course syllabus. A draft may already have been approved by the CCC, but

we expect that the final version used for teaching will incorporate feedback received during the exam process.

- One week before the exam, students will send their exam committee their dissertation pre-proposal.
- Students will take their preliminary exams before Spring break.
- In consultation with their dissertation committee (formally convened after completion of the exam), students complete a dissertation proposal and submit to the Director of Graduate Studies before Commencement weekend in May.

Preparation of Preliminary Exams

American Studies faculty believe there are several forms preparation for preliminary examinations might take, according to the pedagogical aims of the examiner, the disciplinary conventions of the field, and the interests of the student. Providing options for designing the fields will push students to reflect on their learning process, and questions of methodology important for an interdisciplinary scholar. Below, we have outlined three different possibilities. Students will prepare fields with three faculty advisors and they and their advisors may choose from the options below, combine the options, or come up with an entirely new method. Each field could have a different format. In each instance final lists may range from 50-100 books or field-shaping essays based on what is best suited for the proposed field as determined by each faculty field advisor.

The three field advisors constitute the preliminary exam committee. They are members of the Brown faculty, with at least one drawn from the American Studies faculty. Former members of the Brown faculty and/or a maximum of one faculty member from another institution are eligible with permission of the department Chair.

Option 1: Building Out

Students and advisors agree on a topic and series of questions to explore. Students and advisors begin with five to ten texts and then expand the list as they continue to meet. Field lists may eventually include a range of different kinds of texts, in addition to scholarly monographs, including, but not limited to films, broadcasts, exhibits, websites, fiction, poetry and plays. Students and faculty will meet several times to select texts and to draft an essay that explains the questions to be considered and how this reading will prepare students to teach, do research, and present public projects in both disciplinary and interdisciplinary fields. When the field list and field essay have been approved by the faculty exam advisor and submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), the student and faculty will continue to meet to prepare for the exam.

Option 2: Traditional Lists

Students and advisors meet several times to discuss the field as the advisor outlines it and as the student modifies it to meet their interests. Together they come up with a list of books to be read. The student prepares a field essay, attaches the list, and submits it to their faculty exam advisor for approval before submitting to the DGS.

The student and the advisor meet regularly, often as the student finishes reading a subset of the list of books. Sometimes the advisor asks the student to prepare questions, essays, or a syllabus, based on the books on the list, and these writings serve as the basis of the discussion, both before and during the exam.

Option 3: Essay/Project Based

Students and advisors choose a scholarly paper or project previously completed by the student and base their reading and discussions on a revision of the paper or project.

Students might read contextually, as they consider how to revise the paper for publication or exhibition; might consult new primary sources; might consider a theoretical framework for the research; or all three, as they prepare their reading list. Students and faculty meet several times to select books and to draft an essay that explains the questions to be considered and how this reading will prepare students to revise the paper. This essay, including an abstract of the paper or project to be revised, and a beginning list of books to be read, will be approved by the faculty exam advisor and submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS).

Students and advisors will continue to meet to discuss readings and revisions. At the exam, the student will present the thesis, evidence, and method of the proposed scholarly paper or project, how it enters the existing scholarly conversation and/or addresses the public and discuss with the advisor further possible revisions and publication or presentation plans.

Field Essays

The field essays may differ somewhat depending on which exam option students choose, but each student will prepare either a short list of beginning texts or a complete list of texts to be read (complete lists may range from 50-100 titles); an essay (1-2 pages) about each of the three fields; and an overview essay (3 pages). The individual field advisor will sign off on each field essay and list of texts. The overview essay will explain how the fields fit together, how they are interdisciplinary and fit into the field of American Studies, and how they prepare students as scholar/teachers, able to teach introductory courses, conduct research and/or make public presentations. The field essays will state the questions that have guided the building of the field list and discuss how the list was designed (including which option was chosen). The overview essay, the field essays, the lists of texts, and the signed cover pages will be reviewed by the DGS to ensure that students are making good progress and finding the advisors they need. With each option, students will present three field essays, each with a signed coversheet indicating approval by the respective exam advisor, and an overview essay to the department DGS generally by May 15th of Year 2. They will take the exam by Spring Break of Year 3.

Preliminary Examination:

Oral Examination

The oral exam itself may last up to 2.5 hours. Each field advisor will examine the student for 25-30 minutes and there will be a group discussion of the syllabus and the dissertation pre-proposal. Students will choose a chair of the committee who will help schedule the exam, keep the time, and lead the discussion. Students may bring, and should supply to the committee, a

final list of texts, ranging from 50-100 titles per field, on which they will be examined. No other notes will be permitted. Students will send the committee the syllabus and the dissertation pre-proposal (one week before the exam).

Syllabus

In the second-year course, AMST2520, students will draft, workshop, and complete a syllabus for an undergraduate course. Usually, the syllabus will be for a sophomore writing course that the student will teach in their fourth or fifth year. The syllabus should be in the form required by the Brown College Curriculum Committee, including a course rationale (describing the themes and questions taken up by the course plus how it fits into the curriculum of the Department of American Studies), a short description suitable for Banner, a reading list, and a class-by-class schedule of topics to be covered. Students will send the three field advisors, and the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), a revised copy of the syllabus a week before the exam. At the exam, students and advisors will discuss the syllabus and consider suggestions for revisions.

Dissertation Pre-Proposal

Students will prepare a 3–5-page dissertation pre-proposal outlining the questions, evidence, and methods of a proposed dissertation, as far as they have been considered. Students will send the pre-proposal to their advisors and the DGS at least one week before the exam. At the exam, the student and advisors will discuss the pre-proposal, in anticipation of the Dissertation Proposal Meeting to be held in the weeks following successful completion of the exam.

Teaching

The Department values the development of teaching skills in addition to original scholarship. Over the course of their time in the program, graduate students serve as teaching assistants and usually have the opportunity to develop and teach undergraduate courses reflecting their own research and scholarship. The Graduate School requires that doctoral students serve at least one semester as a Teaching Assistant. The Department may require additional teaching assistantships and assignments as students advance in the program. In the required AMST 2520 course, students prepare and present a course of their own design, which may be taught after successful completion of the students' preliminary examination and dissertation proposal (pending syllabus approval from the University). The Department recommends that students start participating in the programs of the Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning in their second year.

The Graduate Labor Organization (GLO) is the union of graduate student employees at Brown University which advocates for the needs of students and supports the personal and professional lives of all student workers. Students appointed as Teaching Assistants, Teaching Fellows, Proctors, or Research Assistants are currently part of the bargaining unit. More information about the GLO can be found at <https://www.glounion.org/>

Teaching Assistantships

While the experiences of teaching assistants vary by course and instructor, responsibilities delegated to a T.A. should not exceed the Graduate School's limit of 15-20 hours per week on average.

Each semester the Curriculum Officer (a member of the department faculty) surveys potential T.A.s to determine their teaching interests for the following semester. Taking into account previous assignments, the Curriculum Officer will make every effort to award students their first or second choice.

The most common T.A. appointments in American Studies involve attending a faculty-led lecture twice a week and leading two discussion sections on Fridays. Larger lecture courses will often have more than one T.A. In addition to grading assignments, as part of your training, the faculty member to whom you are assigned may ask you to prepare and deliver a lecture, help with designing assignments, manage or respond to online discussion posts, or participate in class discussions.

Teaching Assistants are required to hold weekly office hours arranged in consultation with the faculty member. Faculty members should hold regular meetings with T.A.s to plan sections, discuss readings, review grading, etc.

Decisions about final grades ultimately rest with the faculty member. T.A.s with concerns regarding their appointment should speak to the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) and Curriculum Officer.

AMST 0190

American Studies graduate students typically design and teach a sophomore course numbered AMST 0190. AMST 190 courses are developed and taught on the following timeline:

- Complete draft syllabus in AMST 2520 in Year 2
- Submit revised draft syllabus to the Curriculum Officer (cc the DGS) for review by December 1 of Year 3, noting whether you hope to teach the course during Year 4 or Year 5
- If intending to teach during Year 4, work with the Curriculum Officer to submit a course proposal and syllabus for College Curriculum Committee (CCC) review by March 1 of Year 3
- Separately, submit syllabus to preliminary exam committee as outlined in the exam guidelines

If intending to teach during Year 5, work with the Curriculum Officer to submit a course proposal and syllabus for CCC review in the fall of Year 4 (as part of the department-wide process of course scheduling for the following academic year).

AMST 0190 is a sophomore writing course (designated WRIT in the course catalogue). This is a seminar course and proceeds by way of discussion on a focused topic. Such courses include:

- A range of different kinds of texts and assignments.
- 3-5 short writing assignments of different types – one should come quite early in the semester.
- 20-30 pages of writing in total, including opportunities for students to revise their work or otherwise apply feedback on their writing. You may want to include some reading on writing strategies.
- No more than about 100 pages of reading a week.

You should consult the current University guidelines for writing-designated (WRIT) courses. The Sheridan Center website offers guidance for developing such courses. WRIT courses for a particular semester may be viewed in the online course catalog by applying filters.

The Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning

Students will receive teacher training through their teaching assistantships and discuss pedagogical methods and inclusive pedagogy and course design in AMST 2520.

Additional training is available through the Sheridan Center, which offers a four module Teaching Seminar (not taken for credit). Students who complete it receive a Teaching Certificate and qualify to move on to a subsequent Course Design Seminar.

The Sheridan Center also offers workshops and other programs throughout the year.

The Dissertation

Dissertation Committee

Dissertation committee members are often, but not always, the same as the exam field advisors. Dissertation committee personnel must be finalized immediately after the successful completion of the preliminary exam, if not before, and should include one faculty member who has agreed to serve as dissertation chair and two who will be readers. The core dissertation committee includes at least one faculty member from the Department of American Studies and two other Brown faculty members. Former Brown faculty members and/or a maximum of one external faculty member may serve as dissertation committee members by permission of the dissertation committee chair. The committee chair should communicate the membership of the dissertation committee to the DGS. (A fourth committee member may be added later in the process.)

Dissertation Proposal

During Year 3, Semester 2, after the successful completion of their preliminary exams, students will prepare a dissertation proposal. The DGS will call at least one meeting of the cohort, or meet with students individually, to review the process and provide advice. The dissertation

proposal should be 10-15 pages, laying out a key research question as well as a discussion of evidence and methods. A short bibliography of crucial texts should be included, but the proposal should not be simply or centrally a review of the literature. Rather, the proposal should provide an explanation of the project's scholarly contribution. The proposal should begin with a one paragraph abstract.

Within two weeks of the completion of the preliminary exam, students should circulate a draft of the proposal to their dissertation committee.

After circulation of the draft proposal, students should incorporate any revisions requested by their committee members. The committee chair will then schedule a Dissertation Proposal Approval Meeting before the end of Year 3, Semester 2.

At the Dissertation Proposal Approval Meeting, students and faculty should discuss a research agenda and timetable for completion, as well as the challenges of the particular project. The student and faculty should agree on how and when the faculty will:

- meet with the student
- review chapters and comment
- discuss needed changes in drafts

Students must file a copy of their approved dissertation proposal with the DGS, who will make it available to the other faculty members in the department. The approved proposal is due to the DGS before Commencement Weekend in May.

Writing the Dissertation

Students should begin their dissertations in the summer after their third year. Dissertations (including format, content, and length) vary depending on disciplinary conventions. Students should consult the chair of the dissertation committee for advice. The Department of American Studies expects that students will meet with the chair of their dissertation committees at least (though likely more than) once a semester and recommends that the dissertation committee chair call a meeting of the entire committee with the student once a year (virtual meetings are permissible).

Students register for the non-credit-bearing AMST 2990 Thesis Preparation starting in the Fall of their 4th year (the semester following the approval of their proposal) and should do so each ensuing semester they are working on their dissertation. AMST 2990 is ungraded and does not have separate sections for individual faculty advisors.

Students should make steady progress on the research for and writing of their dissertations. While writing pace will vary, students should aim to have at least one complete chapter drafted by the end of their fourth year, plus some writing towards a second chapter unless significant field or archival work is required in the fourth year. Steady writing progress is expected thereafter, with the goal of completing a full draft of the dissertation by the end of the fall of

the sixth year. Since students are not guaranteed financial support beyond Year Six, they should aim to be in a position to complete dissertation revisions and file for the degree that spring. Students should follow guidelines established during the Dissertation Approval Meeting for how they will share writing for comment with individual committee members. In most cases the dissertation committee chair will review chapters and suggest revisions before writing is shared with other committee members.

As students near completion of their dissertations they should be in close conversation with their dissertation chair on their timeline to completions and familiarize themselves with completion and filing deadlines established by the Graduate School. These can be found [HERE](#).

Students should plan for three significant completion requirements:

- The Dissertation Approval Meeting – Should be scheduled in consultation with the dissertation chair. The date should be shared with the DGS and the Department Manager who will help coordinate reservation of a room for the approval meeting if needed. (More details below.)
- Apply to Graduate – Deadline to apply to graduate is set by the Graduate School and not flexible. Usually mid-April for a Spring semester completion.
- File the Dissertation – Deadline to file is also set by the Graduate School and is not flexible. Students should make sure to follow the substantial and significant formatting guidelines for filing.

Dissertation Approval Meeting

The Department of American Studies does not hold a formal defense of the dissertation. Instead, committee chairs convene a final Dissertation Approval Meeting ahead of the official filing deadline (in person or virtually at the discretion of the committee chair). The final approval meeting should not be scheduled until core committee members agree that there are no major concerns that need to be addressed. Students, then, should plan to share their complete dissertation with their committee with enough time to incorporate any substantive feedback and then circulate a final revised version at least two weeks before the approval meeting. The Dissertation Approval Meeting provides an opportunity for dissertation committees to collectively discuss the dissertation's strengths and its growth areas. At the approval meeting, faculty may ask questions and offer suggestions for the dissertation's future. Committee members might also make small final revision requests (usually typos, footnotes, a few sentences) before formally filing. The Approval meeting also provides an opportunity for the committee to sign the dissertation signature page (in hard copy or digitally) required for filing the dissertation with the Graduate School. In rare cases, faculty may want to see the requested final revisions before signing. It is up to the completing doctoral student to coordinate any such final review (usually with their committee chair) and gather signatures from their committee.

A copy of the signed cover sheet should be shared with the Director of Graduate Studies and the Department Manager. A dissertation defense information form does not need to be submitted.

Academic Standing and Advising

The primary responsibility for meeting all benchmarks rests with the student. The Department's Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) will serve as the primary advisor for first-year students and oversee the advising of all other students, particularly with regards to interactions with the Graduate School and issues of progress toward the degree. The Director of Graduate Admissions will help facilitate an informal meeting for first-years with a possible exam/dissertation advisor (typically a faculty member identified by the student in their application) during their first semester. First-year students will additionally be assigned an informal mentor—typically someone not closely connected to their research specialization—who will meet with them once per semester to help familiarize them with department culture and broaden their support network. In the fall of year two, this secondary layer of advising support comes from the instructor of AMST 2520. Once students have identified a preliminary exam committee chair and/or dissertation advisor, that faculty member serves as the student's primary scholarly advisor. Students are expected to consult with the DGS at regular intervals and to keep the DGS apprised of any issues that would prevent them from meeting progress benchmarks on time.

Grades of incomplete (INC) should be resolved as soon as possible and certainly within a semester, as the Graduate School uses coursework grades to assess each student's official academic standing during the first two years. Students are generally expected to complete their preliminary examinations and the dissertation proposal by the end of year 3. After the 3rd year, students are expected to make steady progress on their dissertation research and writing. The DGS evaluates this progress in consultation with dissertation chairs and must make annual standing reports to the Graduate School for each student. Any student not meeting program deadlines or progress expectations (without prior consultation with the DGS) will be considered not in good standing and will receive a letter of explanation from the DGS to that effect, sent on behalf of the department. Should a student be out of good standing for two consecutive semesters, and after consultation with the Graduate School, the Department will mandate either a Leave of Absence or termination.

The American Studies faculty will meet once a year, in a Spring meeting called by the DGS, to consider the progress of each of the current doctoral students enrolled in the program with the input of all faculty advisors who work with doctoral students on exams and dissertations as well as those with doctoral Teaching Assistants. The discussion of the work of advanced doctoral students will be undertaken in order to collectively celebrate successes in student publications and presentations; flag potential problems and suggest possible solutions; and consider changes to the graduate curriculum.

Job Placement Director

Beginning in their 5th year, students are invited to meet with the Job Placement Director, a dedicated faculty member offering support to applicants on the academic job market. The Job Placement Director helps students to workshop application materials (including cover letters, research statements, etc.), arranges mock interviews, and shares information about specific opportunities, from faculty positions to writing positions. Students should determine if they are ready to go on the market in consultation with their dissertation committee chair and when ready to do so reach out to the Job Placement Director in the Spring semester before the year they intend to be on the market (ideally the week after spring break). Support from the Job Placement Director is concurrent with that of their dissertation committees.

Checklist and Suggestions

SEMESTER ONE (YEAR ONE, FALL)

REQUIREMENTS

- Complete AMST 2010
- Complete two elective seminars
- Meet with DGS for independent advising (AMST 2920)

SUGGESTIONS

- Make time for some campus events like those scheduled by the Grad Consortium, Center for Public Humanities, Sarah Doyle, the LGBTQ Center, GSC and attend some guest lectures, job talks, or conference

SEMESTER TWO (YEAR ONE, SPRING)

REQUIREMENTS

- Complete three elective seminars
- Meet with the DGS for independent advising (AMST 2920)

SUGGESTIONS

- Students not pursuing another MA program file for spring graduation.
- Decide whom you want to conduct your fall independent study course with. Speak to this faculty member to see if they are interested and available and, if so, begin planning what your reading course will entail

SUMMER ONE (BETWEEN YEARS ONE & TWO)

REQUIREMENTS

- Read to solidify field topics

SUGGESTIONS

- Start thinking about what your AMST 0190 topic will be and with whom you want to conduct your Spring independent study courses

SEMESTER THREE (YEAR TWO, FALL)

REQUIREMENTS

- TA
- Complete AMST 2520
- Complete two elective seminars
- Complete exam-related Independent Study to solidify first list and field essay

SUGGESTIONS

- Revise Overview essay drafted in 2520 with insights from field essay completed with faculty advisor
- Complete Sheridan Certificate One

SEMESTER FOUR (YEAR TWO, SPRING)

REQUIREMENTS

- TA
- Complete two elective seminars
- Complete two exam-related Independent Study to solidify second and third lists and field essays

SUGGESTIONS

- Seminars should be selected with preliminary examination field development in mind.
- Plan to begin reading for fields over the summer

SUMMER TWO (BETWEEN YEARS TWO & THREE)

REQUIREMENTS

- Begin reading for at least one field

SUGGESTIONS

- Plan a schedule for reading remaining lists through likely exam date

SEMESTER FIVE (YEAR THREE, FALL)

REQUIREMENTS

- TA
- Take three Independent Study courses with exam advisors.
- Submit course syllabus to Curriculum Officer and DGS by Dec. 1 for review, noting whether you intend to teach in Year 4 or Year 5.

SUGGESTIONS

- Complete Sheridan Certificates
- Identify potential dissertation committee members (if different than exam field advisors)

SEMESTER SIX (YEAR THREE, SPRING)

REQUIREMENTS

- TA
- If intending to teach AMST 0190 in Year 4, work with Curriculum Officer to ensure course proposal is submitted for CCC review by March 1
- Submit AMST 0190 syllabus and pre-dissertation proposal to Exam Committee and DGS one week prior to exam
- Complete Preliminary Exam
- Complete Dissertation Proposal and submit approved proposal to DGS

SUGGESTIONS

- Consider whether you want to add a dissertation committee member from another institution (discuss with your committee chair).

GENERAL SUGGESTIONS & SUGGESTIONS FOR DISSERTATING YEARS

- Revise and publish a seminar essay as an article. Summer Years 2 - 4
- Publish a dissertation chapter as an article. Year 4+
- Enroll in advanced Sheridan Certificate Programs. Years 3+
- Present at a graduate conference. Any year (especially 2+)
- Present at a regional or national conference. Any year (especially 3+)
- Participate in workshops or un-conferences outside of Brown. Any year
- Make an appointment to go over your CV at the Career Lab. Years 2+
- Apply for summer research travel grants. Years 2+
- Attend the annual ASA meeting. Any year (especially 2+)
- Submit a paper or organize a panel to submit to ASA. Years 3+
- Take a service position in the department or university. Years 2+
- Apply for the Brown Executive Scholars Program, if interested in administrative work. Years 4+
- Submit complete draft of Dissertation in semester 11
- Conduct job search in semester 11 (possibly semester 9 if ready)

Funding

Students who are admitted to Brown's doctoral programs are guaranteed six years of support, including a stipend, tuition remission, health-services fee, and health-insurance subsidy. Funding after the sixth year is not guaranteed and requires submission of a [Dissertation Extension Proposal](#). See the Grad School site for [calendars](#) of due dates and forms.

Students are encouraged to review the Graduate School's [incentive program](#), which provides incentive supplements for external fellowship awards received by eligible doctoral students in good standing over the course of the academic year.

Internal Funding Sources

The Graduate School offers a number of competitive sources of [funding](#). These include Interdisciplinary Opportunities Fellowships at one of the campus research Centers, Dean's Faculty Fellowships and other [opportunities](#). See the Grad School website for details and deadlines and consult with the DGS when appropriate for departmental support of applications. Other opportunities on campus include:

[Cogut Center for the Humanities Graduate Fellowships](#)

The Cogut Center for the Humanities selects a few graduate fellows each year. The application period is early in the spring semester and is open to any students who have advanced to candidacy. The application includes a dissertation abstract, a statement, two letters of recommendation, a letter of support from your DGS, and a writing sample. Selected fellows are expected to participate in Cogut workshops and work closely with the fellows and faculty at the center.

[Pembroke Graduate Fellowships](#)

Graduate students who have research interests related to the [upcoming Pembroke Seminar topic](#) may submit a proposal. Up to three students will be selected. Each Graduate Student Fellow will receive a research stipend of \$1,000 for the academic year. Fellows apply through UFunds and will need a three-page research project description, brief bibliography, and a brief letter of support from either a faculty member (exam advisor or dissertation committee member) or the DGS.

External Funding

Brown's [Office of Vice President for Research](#) provides information about various resources for external funding. American Studies students may find [Grants.gov](#) and the [National Endowment for the Humanities](#) of particular interest.

Travel Funding

The Graduate School offers some support for research travel and conferences. See the Grad School site for [updated available opportunities](#) which include:

[Conference Travel Fund](#)

Graduate students who present at academic conferences can apply to the Graduate School for up to \$700 to cover related travel expenses. Given funding limitations, application does not guarantee support.

[The Doctoral Research Travel Grant](#)

Doctoral students can apply to the Graduate School for up to \$1000 to cover travel and related expenses for scholarly research. Given funding limitations, an application does not guarantee support.

[The Graduate Student Council](#)

The GSC provides up to \$300 to reimburse conference and dissertation/field work related travel expenses. Preference is given to applicants who have exhausted, been denied, or are ineligible for other means of funding. Applicants who have applied to other funding sources and have not yet received notification should also apply for GSC funds.

Outside Sources

Many conferences offer competitive graduate student travel funding.

[The ASA](#) offers partial reimbursement to advanced students presenting at the annual meeting through their Baxter Travel Grant. Other professional organizations—OAH, MLA, etc.—have similar programs.

Status

The following serves only as a summary of the University's leave policies. Please consult the links herein and the Graduate School [Handbook](#) for further details.

[Leaves of Absence](#)

During the course of graduate study, a student may need to request a leave of absence. Applications for leaves of absence (with the exception of urgent medical or psychological leaves) should be sent to the Graduate School at least four weeks before the start of the semester in which the leave is to be taken.

Leaves of absence are normally granted for one to two semesters and a summer. To return to active status, and to be eligible for funding in the next academic term, students must notify the Graduate School in writing by May 1 for a fall-semester return or November 1 for a spring-semester return.

Categories of Leave

Parental Relief Leave: This leave is granted for childbirth or adoption.

Family Leave: This leave is granted for family needs.

Medical or Psychological Leave:	This leave is granted for a serious physical or psychological problem encountered by a graduate student.
Professional Development Leave:	This leave is granted for an approved educational or professional development opportunity that advances the student's pedagogic goals.
Probationary Leave:	This leave is granted to students for problems with academic performance.
Personal Leave:	This leave is an elective leave taken for personal reasons.

All leaves except personal leaves (except in exceptional cases and by petition) allow students to defer funding commitments and should not affect their academic progress or standing.

[Parental Relief Policy](#)

Graduate students in good or satisfactory academic standing who are supported by a stipend are eligible for Parental Relief for the care of a newly born infant or adopted child under 16 years of age. Doctoral students beyond year 6 are not eligible for Parental Relief. Graduate students may request Parental Relief up to two times during their tenure as a student at Brown. In instances in which co-parents are both graduate students at Brown, both parents are eligible for Parental Relief. The relief provides a stipend for one semester or a summer. See the link above for full details, procedures, and application forms.

[Family Leave of Absence](#)

A student in the Graduate School at Brown University may take an unpaid family leave of absence for care of an immediate family member (spouse, domestic partner, child, or parent) with a serious health condition. Students may take a family leave of absence for one or two semesters.

Sexual and Gender-based Harassment, Student Conduct + Community Standards

Sexual and Gender-based Harassment

The American Studies Department is committed to a harassment-free educational and work environment. Our policies on harassment follow those of the university. According to the Graduate School: "Brown is committed to promoting a safe, welcoming and inclusive campus culture. It is the responsibility of every member of the Brown University community to foster this type of environment. This requires our community to be able to identify and address prohibited conduct. Prohibited conduct under our Title IX policy includes gender and sexual harassment, sexual violence, relationship and interpersonal violence, and stalking. This type of conduct will not be tolerated."

Visit the [Sexual Misconduct and Title IX](#) page for the most up-to-date information about Brown University's *Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment, Sexual Violence, Relationship and Interpersonal Violence and Stalking Policy* and resources for students affected by these issues.

In the American Studies Department, the Chair and Director of Graduate Studies as well as the rest of the faculty are designated as “Responsible Employees” under Title IX regulations. They have undergone training that qualifies them to respond to student reports of prohibited conduct. Please see the specific sections of the University [policy](#) for more information and procedures for reporting.

For immediate aid or information students can call the Sexual Assault Response Line, administered by University Counseling and Psychological Services at **401-863-6000** for confidential crisis support.

See the [student resources page](#) for other sources of immediate support.

See also the Grad School’s resources for [crisis support](#).

Student Conduct and Community Standards

Our department’s faculty, staff, and students are all bound by the [Brown University Code of Conduct](#). Students are encouraged to review the Code of Conduct which, among other things, requires that “each community member must treat other community members fairly and with respect and dignity.” Students should also familiarize themselves with the [Code of Student Conduct and Community Standards](#). Adherence to both the University Code of Conduct and the Student Conduct and Community Standards in all your interactions in the department, on campus, and beyond during your time as students at Brown, is an expectation for maintaining good standing.

[Student Conduct and Community Standard deans](#) are available to support students in the process of addressing breaches to the codes of conduct and community standards.

Graduate Consortium

The Graduate Consortium (GC) is a long-standing student-run collective within the American Studies PhD program. Each year doctoral students in American Studies elect two of their colleagues to serve both as representatives to the Graduate Student Council and as facilitators of the consortium. The consortium typically holds monthly meetings to discuss matters of interest to graduate students. Consortium representatives may also attend monthly faculty meetings at the invitation and discretion of the Department Chair. In the past the consortium has advocated for student interests regarding curricular standards, office space, and student rights and responsibilities as teachers, teaching assistants and workers. The consortium also helps facilitate mentoring relationships and plan events aimed at social cohesion or professional development.

Linked Resources

[The Graduate School](#)

[Psychological Services](#)

[Registrar](#)

[Health Insurance](#)

[Graduate School Handbook](#)

[CareerLab](#)

[Academic and Student Conduct Codes](#)

[Student and Employee Accessibility Services](#)

[Graduate Student Council](#)

[Brown Athletics and Recreation](#)

[American Studies Library Guide](#)

[Rhode Island Public Transit Authority](#)

[Library Graduate Student Resources &
Carrel Reservations](#)

[GSC Listserve Subscriptions](#)

[Open Graduate Education Program](#)

[The Sheridan Center for Teaching and
Learning](#)

[Public Humanities](#)

[Computing and Information Services](#)

[Teaching with Technology Canvas Tutorials](#)