

Sociology

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Degree Requirements

Overview

The PhD program is a six-year degree program. Although students will normally earn a master's degree on the way to the PhD, we do not offer a standalone master's degree program. All required course work is meant to be completed within the first three years, although students may continue to take elective courses after the third year. The program is designed in an integrated and streamlined way so that students have ample opportunity to develop research on their own and with faculty and peers. Graduate students will be expected to participate in professional socialization activities including departmental colloquiums, departmental workshops, and departmental mini-conferences, among other opportunities.

Research Collaboration with Faculty

During their first three semesters, students will engage in a required collaborative research project with their faculty mentor. These research collaborations will integrate students into a faculty member's research. Students will work closely with their faculty mentor on a particular project, ideally resulting in a jointly-authored publication early in the student's program of study. Research collaborations will often continue informally past the third semester.

Core Courses

- Professional Development
- Central Questions and Approaches in Sociology
- Sociological Theory
- Research Design
- Quantitative Methods
- Qualitative Methods
- Professional Writing

Electives

Other substantive or methods courses in sociology will be offered that reflect our faculty's research and methodological areas (<https://sociology.wustl.edu/browse/>) of expertise. With departmental approval, advanced methods courses may be taken in other departments and count toward degree requirements.

Master's Thesis

The master's thesis/empirical paper is an important milestone and a major publication opportunity. Midway through the second year, students will have assembled a committee of three faculty members and received detailed collective feedback on their research. By the end of the summer after their second year, students will complete a draft of their thesis/paper and submit it to their advisor for feedback. By the end of the fifth semester, students will have polished their thesis/paper in the professional writing seminar, defended it before their faculty committee, and submitted the research for publication.

Mentored Experiences

Students participate in a Mentored Experience for at least three semesters. At least two of those Mentored Experiences will be Mentored Teaching Experiences (MTEs), and one may be a Mentored Professional Experience (MPE). Most students will engage in a Mentored Teaching Experience for three semesters.

Qualifying Exam Paper

After completing the required course work and the master's thesis/empirical paper, students will write one qualifying exam paper that demonstrates their expertise in two particular subfields of the discipline. Students will choose **two** reading lists developed by the faculty that will contain central contributions to major areas of study (<https://sociology.wustl.edu/browse/>), such as race and ethnicity, gender, family, immigration, political sociology and social movements, economic sociology, work and organizations, social policy and practice, and policing and criminal justice. Students will be encouraged to add supplemental readings that pertain to their specific emerging research interests.

After reading the material on the two lists, students will write a single paper that identifies important areas of overlap or divergence in the two sociological subfields, that applies insights from one subfield to another, or that otherwise reviews the existing research in a novel way. This process should produce a paper with original insights and potentially be suitable for publication in one of several journals that explicitly welcomes agenda-setting or review articles. This paper will typically be completed by the end of the third year.

Dissertation Proposal

After completing the qualifying exam paper, students should write a dissertation proposal that describes the motivation and plan for their research. They will receive feedback on drafts of the proposal from a committee they have assembled that consists of at least three faculty members. A final dissertation proposal must be defended before the committee no later than the second semester of the fourth year.

Dissertation

The PhD dissertation should be an integrated, coherent, and original work. It may be modeled on a book manuscript that builds from an introduction and description of the research to a series of empirical chapters. Alternatively, it may take a “three-paper” format, in which each chapter takes the form of a paper that could be submitted for publication on its own. According to the degree requirements of the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, the dissertation must be defended before a committee of five faculty members, including at least three faculty members from this department and one person from another department or university.