



THE W. E. B. DU BOIS DEPARTMENT OF AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Guidelines for Graduate Study

2009 – 2010

Welcome and a Note

Welcome to the W.E.B. Du Bois Department of Afro-American Studies. As a graduate student in this department, you are joining a forty-year tradition of intellectual activism and academic excellence. The Du Bois Department was founded in 1969 as a program in the Department of English here at UMass Amherst. That program quickly became a free-standing department in 1970. In 1996, we admitted our first graduate students.

The entire faculty in the Du Bois Department participates in the admission process and in all reviews and assessments of students in the program. We also admit students into the graduate program as a cohort. This means that we encourage you to study together, share ideas, and support the success of your entire group. You, of course, must write your own papers and formulate your own conclusions—informed by the variety of intellectual stimuli you receive. We also encourage your predecessors to mentor and support you through the program.

The faculty in the Du Bois Department are scholars in the culture, history, literature, and politics of African Americans and the Pan-African world/Black Diaspora. The objective of this cross-disciplinary structure of the department is to provide an exciting and energetic intellectual environment. We will ask you to navigate and understand theories and methods from these various intellectual disciplines. You will find, for instance, that a scholarly literary analysis will differ from a scholarly political analysis. The intellectual skills, however, are the same, and the two scholarly approaches can operate together and provide a rich understanding of the materials at hand. We hope that along the way you will find your own intellectual focus and scholarly path (be it singular or multiple) in African American studies. Indeed the eminent scholar, activist, and Massachusetts native for whom the department is named, William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, produced intellectual ideas that influenced current thought in history, sociology, literature, politics, African American Studies, American Studies, and more. He was a model of the highest standards of scholarship and intellectual integrity for his time. We anticipate the same from you.

**Looking forward,
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Note: The information in the following pages is for reference purposes only and is subject to change. For the most recent information on graduate studies in the Du Bois Department, you should contact the Graduate Program Director.

The First Year

All first-year graduate students in the Du Bois Department take Major Works in Afro-American Studies, a one-year-long, team-taught seminar. Major Works counts as a double seminar (2 courses) each semester. This course meets on Mondays and Wednesdays from 2:30 – 5:00 p.m. AfroAm 701 and 702, Major Works I & II, are open only to first-year students. This course is structured around the two graduate program tracks offered in the Du Bois Department: Literature/Culture and History/Politics. In this course, you will receive a foundation, or the groundwork, in the critical issues, ideas, and readings in African American studies, centering on the culture, politics, history, and literature of African Americans and the Pan-African world/Black Diaspora.

5 Courses:

Fall: AfroAm 701: Major Works I (9 credits/2 courses/Fall only)

Spring: AfroAm 702: Major Works II (9 credits/2 courses/Spring only)

An additional course/seminar in spring

Tricia Loveland will register students for all courses offered in the Du Bois Department. She will automatically register you for courses taken in your **first year**. During the spring term of your first year, the Graduate Program Director (GPD) will assign each new student to an adviser whom you must consult as you select courses for your second year.

During your first year of graduate study in the Du Bois Department, your academic advisers will be the Major Works Coordinators. These coordinators rotate periodically. For the 2009 – 2010 academic year the coordinators are as follows:

Professor Karen Morrison, History/Politics

Professor Jim Smethurst, Literature/Culture.

We know that students are excited to begin working on their specific areas of intellectual interest. The Major Works seminar affords you an opportunity to meet every faculty member in the department and to begin interacting with faculty members with whom you may wish to work as you move through the graduate program. We encourage you to schedule time with professors whose work in the classroom and whose scholarship interest you.

If you have questions, however, about your progress in Major Works, we encourage you to consult first with the track coordinator for the area in question (History/Politics or Literature/Culture). The track coordinators will work as your academic advisers in your first year.

The Second Year

In your second year and with your scholarly interests in mind, you should take courses in the department. You must consult with your adviser to select courses (The GPD will assign advisers before your second year begins). Tricia Loveland will provide all students with the required registration materials. The GPD must initial students' registration forms (signed by your

advisers) before Tricia registers you for courses in the Du Bois Department. If in your second year you wish to take courses in a department other than the Du Bois Department, you must receive the approval of the GPD. Ordinarily, the GPD would not approve courses outside the department before a student's fourth semester. **Students who receive approval to take courses outside the Du Bois Department must register for those courses themselves.** We also strongly encourage all students to take at least one course within the Department (not a required course) that is not on the specific intellectual track on which you believe your dissertation work will focus. That is, if your intellectual bent is toward history/politics, we would like you to take one course on the literature/culture track; of course, the converse of the situation for history/politics students would be the case if your intellectual bent were toward literature/culture.

The second year also is the time to take required courses other than Major Works. When available in your second year, you should take a political science course within the department. Most often students would take Black Political Struggle and the American Political System. This course, however, may not be available until your third year. Also, if you have not taken a required course in literary theory and in historiography, you would take these courses in your second year as well. As with the political science requirement, the abovementioned courses may not be available until your third year.

6 Courses (To include requirements in political science, literary theory, and historiography if available and not yet taken)

Fall: Three (3) AfroAm courses

Spring: Three (3) AfroAm courses

The Comprehensive Examination

All second-year students will take the Comprehensive Examination in January before the spring term of their second year begins. You should plan to be available to receive this take-home examination during the week before classes resume in spring. The examination will focus on your readings in Major Works. The faculty readers will expect you to demonstrate a firm grasp of the content of your readings in Major Works and a critical and analytical mind in response to the topics you will write on for the examination. Tricia Loveland will proctor the examinations. Students must receive a pass from all readers of the Comprehensive Examination before advancing beyond coursework in the Du Bois Department.

The Language Requirement

See the Language Requirement handout for information on satisfying this preliminary requirement for the PhD in the Du Bois Department. If after reading the aforementioned handout, you find that you must satisfy this requirement during your graduate study, or if you are unsure, you are responsible for contacting the Graduate Program Director. (Follow this link to a pdf of the Language Requirement)

The Third Year

By your third year of graduate study, you should begin to focus your course work very specifically on an area of intellectual inquiry in African American studies that interests you. At this point, you could begin to look at courses in other departments that might intersect with your

research. We strongly encourage students to take at least one course in a department other than the Du Bois Department (Taking such courses also could help you select an outside faculty person for your dissertation committee.). You must consult with your adviser to select courses. At this time you also should be thinking about whether or not you will be ready for the Qualifying Exam, which students ordinarily take after completing their third-year courses. If you are certain that you will have met all of the requirements to take the examination by the following September, you should register for the Qualifying Examination Credit, AfroAm 696A. These hours give students an opportunity to do research on and compile their reading lists for the Qualifying Examination. Tricia Loveland will provide all students with the required registration materials. The GPD must initial students' registration forms (signed by your advisers) before Tricia registers you for courses and the Qualifying Examination Credit in the Du Bois Department. **Students who will be taking courses outside the Du Bois Department must register for those courses themselves.**

5 Courses and the Qualifying Exam Credit

Fall: Three (3) courses could include one course outside the Department

Spring: Two (2) courses could include one course outside the Department if you have not taken one yet; also must register for the Qualifying Exam credit if you plan to take your Qualifying Examination during the regularly scheduled examination period in the fall.

Independent Study

Sometimes students have special interests that they will not be able to pursue through the regularly scheduled courses in the department or on campus. Students also may find that the availability of a course will delay their progress in graduate school. In such cases, students can satisfy their intellectual interests by taking Independent Study courses with faculty members who have expertise in the topic. Beginning in the third year (or in special cases the spring semester of the second year), each student may take **one** Independent Study course. Because these courses are not part of the standard curriculum, we allow them very infrequently. The GPD must sign off on all Independent Study courses.

The Qualifying Examination

In their third year, students should begin preparing for their Qualifying Examination. This is an individualized examination for each student. Students may take the Qualifying Examination if they have met the following requirements:

Completed and passed sixteen (16) approved graduate courses with a grade of B- or better.

Completed the language requirement.

Passed both parts of the Comprehensive Examination.

The GPD sets the dates for the Qualifying Examinations; all students who are prepared to take their exam must take it on the date scheduled by the Graduate Program Director. The regularly scheduled Qualifying Examinations will be in September after your third year. Tricia Loveland will proctor the examination.

You may request a delayed examination. The GPD sets the date for delayed examinations in January during your fourth year. If you wish to delay your examination, you must notify the GPD.

In preparation for the Qualifying Examination, students must select a faculty person to work with as their lead or first reader. This faculty person would likely be someone you would like on your dissertation committee. You are not required, however, to select your lead or first reader on your Qualifying Examination as the chair of your dissertation committee or as a member of your dissertation committee. In consultation with this faculty member, students will prepare a reading list of approximately twenty-five (25) selections. When appropriate, both primary and secondary readings should be on the list. After the student and the faculty member have agreed upon the selections for the reading list, the student must notify the GPD to schedule an exam. You must notify the GPD by submitting your reading list, approved by the lead faculty person, to the GPD through email (Copy your lead faculty member in on the message). To schedule a Qualifying Examination in September, you must notify the GPD no later than 31 July.

Two faculty members will read your Qualifying Examination, the one you have selected along with a faculty member from the same scholarly track as your lead faculty. The Graduate Program Director will select your second reader. Students ordinarily do not know who the second reader on their exam is. Upon satisfactory completion of the Qualifying Examination, students will be considered ABD, meaning they have completed all PhD requirements except work on the dissertation (**All But Dissertation**).

Master's Degree

We do not offer a master's degree program in the Du Bois Department of Afro-American Studies at Umass Amherst. We only admit students into and offer a program of study toward the PhD, which is now the terminal degree in African American Studies/Black Studies/African Diaspora Studies/Africana Studies. We offer a master's degree only to students admitted into our PhD program. Current students may submit an application for the Master's Degree for Doctoral Candidates to the GPD after satisfactorily passing twelve graduate courses and the Comprehensive Examination. Follow the link below for information on The Graduate School's master's degree application process:

http://www.umass.edu/gradschool/Masters_graduation_forms.htm.

The Fourth Year (ABD)

In your fourth year, you must register for at least six (6) Dissertation Credits each semester, **and** you must request a full-time memo from the Graduate Program Director. If you do not request a full-time memo, you must register for nine (9) Dissertation Credits. You must register yourself for dissertation credits.

Dissertation Credits and Full-Time Memos

Fall: AfroAm 899: Dissertation Credits (six (6) credits and a full-time memo or nine (9) credits without a full-time memo)

Spring: AfroAm 899: Dissertation Credits (six (6) credits and a full-time memo or nine (9) credits without a full-time memo)

Your Prospectus Approval Meeting and Selecting Your Dissertation Committee

After successfully passing your Qualifying Examination, you should immediately begin to identify faculty members whom you would like to have on your dissertation committee. You should begin with a dissertation chair. At this point, the faculty member whom you choose to chair the prospectus committee should also chair your dissertation committee. Only in rare and unusual cases would you want to change this faculty person. Faculty in the Du Bois Department must chair **all** prospectus meetings and dissertation committees for students in our graduate program. If you are having a difficult time selecting a chair for your Prospectus meeting, and ultimately your dissertation, we urge you to consult with the Graduate Program Director.

In addition to the chair of your committee, you must select three additional faculty members for your prospectus approval meeting. In consultation with the chair of your committee, you should select, if available, a faculty member, other than your chair, with knowledge in the general area of the topic on which your dissertation will focus. You also should select a committee member in a department other than the Du Bois Department. We require that your committee be comprised of at least one faculty member in a department other than the Du Bois Department. You may select among faculty from any of the Five Colleges. Ideally, this person would have an intersecting interest in your topic as well. We do not ordinarily allow more than one person from a department other than the Du Bois Department on dissertation committees. Again, only in rare and unusual cases would you have more than one person outside the Du Bois Department on your prospectus or dissertation committee. In such cases, the student along with his/her dissertation chair must petition the Graduate Program Director for a waiver of this policy. We also strongly urge you to select for your committee a Du Bois Department faculty member on the intellectual track other than that of your dissertation chair, as we take great pride in developing cross-disciplinary scholars.

You may, and actually should, speak informally with prospective members of your dissertation committee. The formal request for a faculty member to be on a dissertation committee should come from your dissertation chair to the faculty member.

How you combine these abovementioned elements into a committee comprised of faculty who will guide you along to the best possible dissertation is entirely up to you and the chair of your committee. If, however, you would like to discuss the composition of your committee with the Graduate Program Director, you should feel free to do so.

Students are responsible for scheduling the prospectus defense and for notifying the GPD that the committee has scheduled a date and time for the defense. You must notify the GPD by submitting your Prospectus (approximately twenty pages), approved by your committee chair, to the GPD through email (Copy your committee chair in on the message). This is a very important step in the process, as the GPD will verify that all members of the prospectus approval committee will be able to serve on the dissertation committee as well. If there are any problems, the GPD will contact the chair of your committee.

After approval of the dissertation prospectus by the committee, the chair will submit the original prospectus and the cover sheet signed by the committee members to the GPD. The GPD will complete the paperwork for final submission to The Graduate School. Students also will have one last opportunity to decide on the composition of their dissertation committee, except the chair. Students should make this decision quickly as the GPD submits the paperwork appointing the dissertation committee within less than one week of the prospectus approval. If there is no request for changes, the GPD will appoint your prospectus approval committee as the dissertation committee.

The Fifth Year Onward

If you have progressed smoothly through your first four years in the Du Bois Department's graduate program, you will now have several years to research and write your dissertation. You may wish to know as well that The Graduate School is reluctant to extend Students' years to completion beyond ten (10) years after their admission. In order to maintain your TAsip, health coverage, loan deferments, and to qualify for financial aid, you should maintain continuous enrollment while completing your dissertation. You may do this by enrolling as a Program Fee student. You may enroll as a Program Fee student only after completing one year of dissertation credits. You are responsible for registering yourself for Program Fee.

Enroll in Program Fee

Fall: GRADSCHL 999 (Program Fee must be paid prior to add/drop)

Spring: GRADSCHL 999 (Program Fee must be paid prior to add/drop)

Scheduling your Dissertation Defense

Only after your dissertation chair has secured the approval of the entire dissertation committee will you be ready to schedule the oral defense of your dissertation. You must discuss with your dissertation chair all aspects of submitting your dissertation chapters to committee members. Your dissertation chair is responsible explaining this process to you and to the other members of your committee. Be warned, however, that it is highly unusual for a student to turn in a dissertation that requires absolutely no revisions. With this statement, I would like to caution you **NOT** to plan to schedule a dissertation defense after completing your first version of the dissertation. In all likelihood you, or your dissertation chair, will receive comments and/or revisions from each member of the committee. Revisions could take as little as a few hours to as long as one year or more, all depending on your schedule and the revisions that the committee requires.

The oral dissertation defense is a public presentation of your scholarship to members of the academy and to fellow students. The chair of your dissertation committee will arrange a date for your oral defense with the other members of the dissertation committee and with you. Your dissertation chair will convey to the GPD through email (copied to Tricia) the name of the student, the requested date for the defense, and the title of the dissertation. You must submit this information to the GPD at least thirty (30) days prior to the date requested for the defense. This advance notice ensures that the Graduate School records your oral defense and announces it to the members of the academy as required by University and Graduate School regulations. The Graduate school has three deadlines by which students must completed oral defenses **and** submit

all materials for their degrees: 15 April for completion in May; 31 August for completion in September; and 15 December for completion in February.

You must be enrolled as a student in the semester that you defend your dissertation. If you have completed at least twelve (12) dissertation hours, you may enroll as a program Fee Student: GRADSCHL 999

Important Miscellany

Transferring Courses

Students cannot transfer any credits that were used to obtain an undergraduate or graduate degree at another university.

We do not accept transfer credits to substitute for content courses or seminars we offer in our graduate program. However, by special petition to the Graduate Program Director, a student may receive consideration to transfer courses in theory and methods, or in historiography. The students must demonstrate with compelling evidence (syllabi, course descriptions, course work, or other documents) that a previous course or courses have prepared a student for the cross-disciplinary scholarship we require for graduate study in the Du Bois Department.

Review of Graduate Students

We want every student we admit to be successful and to leave the program with a PhD in hand. To facilitate the success of each student, the entire faculty reviews each graduate student who is taking courses or preparing for the qualifying exam. These reviews occur at the end of the fall and spring terms, and you will receive from the Graduate Program Director a report on the faculty's assessment of your progress. At the end of the spring term, we also review the progress of **all** continuing students and send written reports to each student enrolled in courses as well as to those students who must take the next scheduled qualifying exam, schedule a prospectus defense, or move forward more expeditiously on the dissertation.

The entire faculty also reviews graduate students if for any reason a student's status in the Du Bois Department's graduate program is in jeopardy. This includes but is not limited to concerns with academic honesty. While we expect graduate students to adhere to the highest standards of intellectual rigor and integrity, we recognize that this is not always the case. You should be aware that failure to maintain the highest level of academic honesty could result in measures ranging from a grade sanction or failure of a course to probation or removal from the graduate program in the Du Bois Department or some combination of some of these measures. While the entire faculty will assess all questions of academic honesty brought before it, students and faculty also have recourse to the university-wide process through the Academic Honesty Board.

Also see statements below from the Graduate School:

The Graduate School's Academic Honesty Policy

It is the expressed policy of the University that every aspect of graduate academic life, related in whatever fashion to the University, shall be conducted in an absolutely and uncompromisingly honest manner by graduate students. Apparent and alleged breaches in this policy are covered in the Graduate Student Academic Policy (Sen. Doc. no. to 89-026). A copy of this policy is

available in the Ombuds Office, Faculty Senate Office and the Office of the Dean of the Graduate School.

Graduate Students' Honor Code

It is expected that all graduate students will abide by the Graduate Student Honor Code and the Academic Honesty Policy (available at the Graduate Dean's Office, the Academic Honesty Office (Ombud's Office) or online at http://www.umass.edu/gradschool/handbook/univ_policies_regulations_a.htm).

Sanctions for acts of dishonesty range from receiving a grade of F on the paper/exam/assignment or in the course, loss of funding, being placed on probation or suspension for a period of time, or being dismissed from the University. All students have the right of appeal through the Academic Honesty Board.

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