

## American Studies Graduate Program Advising Guidelines

During the coursework years, the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) is the advisor of record for graduate students until the selection of their primary advisor. In addition, all first and second year students are assigned an “advising team” of four faculty, and an upper-level student mentor, whom the student may consult for informal advice about courses, graduate school, Yale, and the larger profession. The DGS meets with all individual first- and second- year students at the beginning of each semester to discuss course selection and formal requirements of the program, and is available throughout for advice and consultation. Even for advanced students who have a primary advisor, the DGS is available for mentoring and advice. The DGS leads a year-long prospectus workshop for all third year students, and meets annually with cohorts in their fourth, fifth, and sixth years.

Students choose a primary advisor from among the tenured American Studies faculty (untenured faculty can serve as co-directors, and as committee members); this can happen as soon as students identify who they wish to chair their oral exams, prospectus, and dissertation committees, but it should certainly happen by the end of coursework in the fourth semester, and before their oral exams and prospectus meeting. Refining the focus of dissertation research, and selecting the dissertation advisor and committee unfolds organically during the years of study; the selection is based on many considerations, including shared research interests, trust, and rapport. The advisor may specialize in one or more of the student’s fields or methods of interest, but more importantly, the advisor helps student develop intellectual and professional maturity, and guides the student through the writing and completion of the dissertation. One of the “advising team” from the first- or second-year mentorship may become the student’s advisor, but this does not necessarily happen.

The advisor is responsible for chairing the student’s orals examination committee, prospectus, and dissertation committee. Students can adjust the membership of their prospectus and dissertation committees, if the topic of the dissertation merits it; and under certain circumstances, the student may select to change their advisor at the prospectus or dissertation stage. The commitment to be a student’s advisor includes the responsibility to supervise the dissertation committee and to organize the roles of the faculty committee; and to meet with the student on a regular basis, and to provide oral and written feedback on written work, as well as practical guidance on setting writing goals, time management, career planning, and professional placement. The advisor and student communicate regularly during the writing of the dissertation, including during the advisor’s sabbatical or research leaves.

Dissertation committees generally have three to four members of the Yale faculty, including the dissertation advisor. Members of dissertation committees will confer with the dissertation advisor and other committee members, and will meet with students at least once a year to provide oral and written feedback on materials shared, and to discuss progress and career plans.

After advancement to candidacy, the dissertation committee and student will hold a First Chapter Colloquium; this is generally scheduled for one year after the prospectus meeting. The committee offers feedback, advice, and recommendations on this first piece of writing (it may be any chapter of the dissertation.) After the First Chapter meeting and prior to the submission of the dissertation, the dissertation committee will convene to discuss progress and provide guidance for finishing the dissertation; normally such a meeting would transpire at the outset of the student's fifth year in the program or at the point that the student has completed about two-thirds or 75% of the

dissertation. Both students and faculty advisors are responsible for maintaining contact, and it can be helpful to schedule regular times to communicate about the progress of the work. It is a good practice to share materials well in advance, and to give plenty of notice when letters of recommendation are needed.

Students notify the DGS and Graduate Registrar of their intention to file the dissertation for the degree, and provide a full draft of the dissertation to their advisor and committee for approval. Students should communicate with their advisor and committee members to agree in advance upon a schedule that provides adequate time for them to read and approve the dissertation before student submits it to the Yale Dissertation Office.