

**Disclaimer: This is an English translation of the 2015 German Study and Examination Regulations for the MA in North American Studies (PDF in German available [here](#); 2016 amendment available [here](#)). Please note that only the German version is legally binding.**

**Study and Examination Regulations for the Master's Degree Program in North American Studies  
at the John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies at  
Freie Universität Berlin**

(Version of 1st July 2015, amended 2nd November 2016)

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## **§ 1 Area of Validity**

(1) These regulations stipulate the objectives, content and structure of the Master's degree program in North American Studies at the John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies at Freie Universität Berlin (Master's degree program), and, in addition to the Framework Study and Examination Regulations of Freie Universität Berlin (RSPO), the requirements and procedures for study and examination performance (Leistungen) within the Master's degree program.

(2) It concerns a consecutive Master's degree programme, in accordance with § 23 par. 3. No. 1. letter a) Berlin Higher Education Act, which is research-oriented.

## **§ 2 Qualification Objectives**

(1) Graduates of the Master's degree program will have developed an interdisciplinary understanding of regions and possess in-depth and extensive specialist knowledge. They will be able to analyse and interpret historical developments, structures and institutions in North America and place them in their respective political, social, economic, historical and cultural contexts. In addition, they will be able to examine regional scientific research questions and tasks across disciplines. Graduate will be able to analyse and examine interdisciplinary problems, and to use scientific theories and methods from the disciplines represented at the John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies at Freie Universität Berlin (JFKI). Depending on their choice of a content profile, they will acquire specific knowledge within two disciplines within cultural studies, the humanities and social sciences. The following disciplines are offered within the Master's degree program:

### 1. History

The aim of the specialist, or advanced, discipline "History" is the acquisition of specialist knowledge and methodological skills, as well as the ability to compare with the history of other countries and regions. Historical knowledge as well as historiographical debates concerning the structure and content of social coexistence, of political and cultural practice, as well as the historically developed relationships and interdependencies between the USA, Canada, Latin America, Europe and the Asia-Pacific region will be taught. Students will gain insight into the multi-dimensionality of historical processes, learn to apply historical-critical methods, and develop an understanding of historical studies through confrontation with historiography, and historical theories and methods.

### 2. Culture

The aim of the specialist, or advanced, discipline "Culture" is to deepen the understanding of central communicative practices, conditions and forms of American culture within the fields of the history of ideas, media history and the history of different fields of cultural diversification (e.g. sectionalism, capitalism, immigration). Approaches of cultural theory and theories of American culture form a context for the praxeological, historicising, rhetorical and media-specific investigation of these developments. The students will acquire methodological competencies in cultural analysis and will become capable of pursuing independent questions in cultural studies. They will gain an understanding of the disciplinary distinctiveness of processes and knowledge interests in (media) culture studies in contrast to neighbouring and cooperating disciplines with overlapping subject references such as literary studies, historical studies and sociology.

### 3. Literature

The aim of the specialist, or advanced, discipline "Literature" is the acquisition of knowledge of central forms and developments within North American literature in its many and various forms, especially ethnic and gender-specific manifestations and genres. Students will acquire a fundamental competence in the decoding of artistic forms of expression through comparative

analysis of literary texts using various literary theories and interpretation methods.

#### 4. Politics

The aim of the specialist, or advanced, discipline “Politics” is the broadening and expansion of theoretical, methodological and empirical knowledge in analyses of the USA. Starting from a broad and critical concept of politics and on the basis of problem-oriented theoretical and methodological knowledge, institutions and norms, political processes and, contents of US policy will be examined. Students will become capable of independently developing questions on American politics, and of working on them in a theory-led manner, and of using comparative methods to do so. Training of analytical skills will take place from the point of view of the action orientation in political science.

#### 5. Sociology

The aim of the specialist, or advanced, discipline “Sociology” is to assist in a) the general expansion of scientific, i.e. sociological competence, in confronting theories and empirical findings in sociology examining North America, b) mediation, especially of the competence to analyse and assess theories and empirical findings in a multi-perspective manner, c) the ability to formulate, methodically prepare and independently conduct research projects in the field of North American sociology.

#### 6. Economics

The aim of the specialist, or advanced, discipline “Economics” is to enable the expansion of theoretical and empirical knowledge of structures, institutions and processes of the American economy and economic policy. Special emphasis is placed on regional interrelationships and the global embedding of the North American economic area, as well as the role of the USA in international economic and financial relations.

#### 7. Interdisciplinary Studies

In “Interdisciplinary Studies” students will acquire a critical awareness of methods and theory and the associated of methods and theory and associated evaluation competences. By means of this transdisciplinary dialogue, theoretical and methodological competence acquired in the main areas of study are to be reflected upon in light of fundamental assumptions and research premises. Students will develop an awareness of where disciplinary boundaries and their normative implications for the cognitive process can be crossed. Consequently, different theoretical and methodological traditions will be referenced against each other in such a way that a comprehensive knowledge emerges instead of just the mere addition of specialist knowledge.

(2) Graduates will have obtained advanced scientific knowledge in two of the scientific disciplines mentioned under par. 1 as well as in § 3 par. 1, as well as specialist and interdisciplinary theoretical and methodological competences. Within the framework of specific interdisciplinary events, students will be schooled in scientific evaluation competence and be prepared for creative interdisciplinary dialogue. In addition to the regional competence “North America”, they will display intercultural as well as gender and diversity competences that allow an understanding of national, transregional and global processes, and they will be trained to conduct independent scientific work in various cultural contexts and reflect upon them.

(3) Graduates will become proficient in conducting qualified research work in university and non-university institutions, as well for various scientifically oriented activities, for example in the following fields:

- Policy and political consulting,
- Business and business consulting,
- the Foreign Office and international organisations,
- Non-governmental organisations (NGOs),
- Media and cultural institutions,
- State and municipal planning and administration,
- Adult and continuing education,
- Publishing and libraries

### § 3 Study Content

(1) The Master's degree program provides an overview of North America from the perspective of disciplines located at JFKI. Students examine problems associated with North America in their historical, cultural and social conditionality and dynamics. The Master's degree program problematizes forms of cultural and socio-economic differences in various contexts, and students learn approaches to various questions and issues that concern North America. The Master's degree program offers a profile on an interdisciplinary level, as well as in two of the following six disciplines:

1. History:

An advanced knowledge of North American history in a global historical context; modernisation and social change; external relations and international interrelationships; socio-cultural, political and economic developments, encounters and conflicts.

2. Culture:

An advanced knowledge of the culture and cultural history of the USA in reference to its intra-American and transnational connections. Areas of focus: The history of ideas, media history, self-definition and self-performance of American culture (especially with regard to the interplay and tension between "diversity" and "nationhood").

3. Literature

An advanced knowledge of the literature and literary history of the USA and Canada in reference to their inner-American and transatlantic references relationships, but also considering their ethnic and gender-specific forms of expression, as well as knowledge of literary historical trends and epochs in cultural and social-historical contexts and in intermedial interdependence.

4. Politics

An advanced knowledge of political structures and processes in North America (USA and Canada) the special relationship between civil society, regionalisation and globalisation, policies and politics in relation to interest groups, social movements and trade unions, gender, city and community, social and labour market policy, foreign policy and international relations.

5. Sociology

The study of sociology aims to engender the ability to understand the structures and processes underlying the empirical phenomena and developments of North American societies. The following aspects are taught in detail: the fundamental structures and developments of North American societies (social structure, social inequality, power and ruling structures, organisations and social change); individual areas of particular importance for the development of North American societies (e.g. urban development, ethnicity and multiculturalism, the place of women, crime and deviance, religious movements).

6. Economics

An advanced knowledge of North American economic development and its causes from the colonial age to the present day; of current domestic and foreign trade policy, also in its historical dimension; of North America's role in the world economy, also examined through transatlantic comparison.

7. Interdisciplinary Studies

Theories and methods of cultural science analysis; theories and methods of literary studies, political science, sociology, economics and history, especially comparative methods and transfer research.

(2) The special feature of the Master's degree program lies in the association of regional expertise with specialist methods, as well as in the concurrent existence of interdisciplinary cooperation, disciplinary expansion and international orientation. Furthermore, students engineer a specialist

professional profile by choosing two disciplines during the course of their university studies. Interdisciplinary knowledge and specialist knowledge are linked. This course of studies examines interdisciplinary insights into social, economic, cultural and political development processes and dynamics, taking into account necessary theoretical and methodological instruments.

#### **§ 4**

#### **Academic Advising and Course Advising**

(1) General academic advising is carried out by the Center for Academic Advising and Psychological Counseling of Freie Universität Berlin.

(2) Academic advising is conducted by the professors who offer courses in the Master's degree program in their regular office hours.

#### **§ 5**

#### **Examining Board**

The Examining Board for the Master's degree program, as appointed by the Governing Board of the John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies at Freie Universität Berlin, is responsible for organising examinations and other tasks as listed in the RSPO.

#### **§ 6**

#### **Standard Study Period**

The standard study period is four semesters.

#### **§ 7**

#### **Composition and Structure; Credit Points Allocation**

(1) Over the course of the Master's degree program, achievements totalling 120 credit points must be accomplished. The Master's degree program comprises:

1. the selected specialisation discipline worth 30 credit points
2. the second selected discipline worth 30 credit points
3. interdisciplinary studies worth 25 credit points,
4. the module "North American Studies Colloquium" worth 5 credit points
5. the Master's thesis worth 30 credit points.

(2) Within the Master's degree program, six disciplines are offered, of which two must be selected and completed. At the beginning of the 3rd subject-specific semester, students must decide which of the two selected disciplines is to be their specialist discipline. The Master's thesis must be completed in the specialist discipline.

(3) The following modules must be completed in each of the disciplines selected in accordance with par. 2:

1. History:

- Module A: North America in the World (10 credit points),
- Module B: North American History until 1865 (10 credit points) and
- Module C: North American History since 1865 (10 credit points).

2. Culture:

- Module A: American History of Ideas and Theories of American Culture (10 credit points),
- Module B: Culture of Nationality and Diversity (10 credit points) and
- Module C: Cultural History of Individual Media and Aesthetic Forms of Representation (10 credit points).

3. Literature:

- Module A: Literary History (10 credit points),
- Module B: Literary Theory (10 credit points) and
- Module C: Literary Text Analysis (10 credit points).

4. Politics:

- Module A: Theories and Methods of Political Science (10 credit points),
- Module B: Institutions, Actors and Processes (10 credit points) and
- Module C: Policy Areas / Policy Research (10 credit points).

5. Sociology:

- Module A: Sociological Theories of North America (10 credit points),
- Module B: Social Systems, Institutions and Regulations – Sense and Function (10 credit points) and
- Module C: The Study of Social Process – Problem, Conflict, Crisis (10 credit points).

6. Economics:

- Module A: North American Economic Policy in its Historical Dimension (10 credit points),
- Module B: US Domestic Economic Policy (10 credit points) and
- Module C: US Foreign Trade Policy (10 credit points).

(4) The following modules are to be completed as part of Interdisciplinary Studies:

- Module: Current Topics and Research Areas in North American Studies 1 (10 credit points),
- Module: Current Topics and Research Areas in North American Studies 2 (10 credit points) and
- Module: Current Topics and Research Areas in North American Studies 3 (5 credit points).

(5) The module descriptions for the Master's degree program in Appendix 1 provide information on admission requirements, content and qualification objectives, types of teaching and learning, workload, types of active participation, examinations to be taken during the course, regular participation obligations for types of teaching and learning, credit points assigned to each module, and standard duration and the frequencies of modules offered.

(6) An illustrative degree program table in Appendix 2 provides information on the recommended course of study in the Master's degree program.

## § 8

### Types of Teaching and Learning

The following types of teaching and learning are offered as part of the courses on offer at Freie Universität Berlin:

1. Lectures (Vorlesungen: V) provide fundamental knowledge and supply an example-oriented introduction to the methodological and theoretical exploration of larger amounts of larger amounts of material and text, namely context for topics.
2. Seminars (Seminare: S) serve to impart knowledge of a defined subject area and assist in acquiring the skills to work independently on a question, to present results and discuss them critically. The main forms of work are seminar discussions based on teaching materials, specialist literature and sources as well as group work.
3. Advanced seminars (Hauptseminare: HS) are the sites of in-depth examination of the main disciplines due to the use of specialist literature and because the current state of research and relevant source material are taken into account; the advanced seminars promote independent scientific work.
4. Colloquia (Kolloquien: Ko) serve as the locations where independently acquired specialist knowledge may be presented. Here, research results and current problems of international are presented. They assist in the practice of constructive-critical interdisciplinary dialogue; as a rule, they consider current research work from the main discipline and critically examine it in reference

to the development of personal scientific of individual scientific questions and the refinement of methodological and theoretical competence. During colloquia, current projects and published research contributions are analysed. In addition, guest lectures take place in which visiting scholars give lectures on current research projects and their work is discussed.

5. Oberseminars (Oberseminare: OS) examine questions from the study program of the Master's degree program. In addition to teaching expertise, the focus is on teaching critical judgement in respect of solutions and interpretations offered, as well as the theoretical approaches and methods on which the proposed solutions and interpretations are based. Teamwork, oral and visual presentations as well as source-oriented scientific work are supported and foregrounded.

6. The lecture series ring (Ringvorlesung: RV) generally focuses on a current topic in the greatest possible disciplinary diversity. Lectures from all disciplines represented at JFKI are supplemented by guest lectures by German and international scientists. In addition, the lecture series ring also offers a forum for contributions from person outside the field.

7. Guided private study (angeleitetes Selbststudium: aS) essentially consists of independent thematic reading and provides the processing of an individually chosen topic based on a literature list agreed with the supervising teacher. It serves to nurture the students' individual profile development. Guided private study is supervised by an authorised teacher through regular consultations in discussions or colloquia.

## **§ 9 Master's Thesis**

(1) The Master's thesis should demonstrate that the student is able to work independently on a question in the field of the specialisation discipline at an advanced scientific level, and is able to present the results appropriately in writing, classify them scientifically and document them.

(2) Students are admitted to the Master's thesis upon application if they can prove at the time of application that they

1. have recently enrolled in the Master's degree program at Freie Universität Berlin and
2. have already completed modules worth at least 60 credit points in the Master's degree program.

(3) The application for admission to the Master's thesis shall be accompanied by proof that the requirements in accordance with par. 2 have been met, as well as confirmation from a teacher, who is qualified to oversee examination, stating that he or she is prepared to accept supervision of the Master's thesis. The confirmation should have been issued no longer than four weeks previously. The appropriate Examining Board decides on the application. If a statement of acceptance for the supervision of the Master's thesis is not submitted in accordance with sentence 1, the Examining Board will appoint a supervisor.

(4) The Examining Board, in consultation with the supervisor, assigns the topic of the Master's thesis. The topic and task assignment must be designed in such a way

as to ensure the work can be completed before the deadline. The task and compliance to deadlines are to be documented.

(5) The Master's thesis should contain about 18,000 words. The time to be spent on the Master's thesis amounts to 23 weeks. It may be written in either German or English. If a student has been prevented from working on the thesis for a period of more than three months for a valid reason, the examining board will decide whether the Master's thesis must be begun afresh. Examination performance with regard to the Master's thesis will be deemed not to have been undertaken in cases when the Examining Board has decided upon a further attempt.

(6) The date set for the start of work is the date of issue of the topic by the Examining Board. The topic can be returned within the first four weeks, and in those cases, it will not be considered as issued. Upon submission, the student must provide written confirmation that he or she has

composed the Master's thesis without assistance and has used no other sources or resources apart from those cited and acknowledged. The Master's thesis must be submitted in three bound copies, as well as in electronic form in Portable Document Format (PDF) to the chairperson of the Examining Board. A copy of thesis can may be catalogued in the institutes's library with the consent of the examinee after completion of the exam.

(7) The Master's thesis shall be evaluated within six weeks by two examiners appointed by the Examining Board, who shall provide a written statement to that effect. The supervisor of the Master's thesis should be one of the examiners. Persons experienced in professional practice and training who possess the qualification through examination or an equivalent qualification, may also be appointed as examiners even if they are not teaching.

(8) The Master's thesis is passed if the grade for the Master's thesis is at least "sufficient" (4.0).

## **§ 10**

### **Retaking Examinations**

If a Master's thesis is not deemed sufficient to have passed, it may be rewritten once more. Other examinations taken during a course of study may be repeated three times.

## **§ 11**

### **Study Abroad**

(1) It is recommended that students study abroad at an American or Canadian university. As part of the study abroad, some assignments may be exchanged for credit in the Master's degree program.

(2) Prior to a study abroad period, an agreement between the student, the chairperson of the Examining Board responsible for the Master's degree program, and the responsible office at the target university for the duration of the study abroad shall be agreed upon. It will detail which achievements completed as part of the study abroad period are equivalent to the achievements in the Master's degree program, as well as the credit points assigned to them. Achievements completed in accordance with the agreement will be credited.

(3) It is recommended that the study abroad period takes place during the third semester of the Master's degree program.

## **§ 12**

### **University Degree**

(1) The prerequisite for a university degree is that is that the achievements required under §§ 7 and 9 of these Regulations are satisfied.

(2) The university degree will not be awarded if the student has not completed his or her academic records for the same degree program, for the same subject, or for a module which is comparable or identical to one of the modules studied in the Master's degree program, or if he or she has failed to pass examinations, or if he or she still has outstanding examinations at another institution of higher education.

(3) The application for admission to the conferral of the university degree shall be accompanied by evidence that the prerequisites as detailed in paragraph 1 exist, and by an assurance that none of the named cases in paragraph 2 apply to the applicant. The relevant examining board will make a decision on the application.

(4) After passing the examination, a Master of Arts (M. A.) degree will be awarded. Students will receive a report card and a certificate (Appendices 3 and 4) as well as a Diploma supplement (English and German). Furthermore, a supplement to the report card (Transcript) detailing

individual modules and their components will also be issued. Upon application, English versions of the report card and certificate can also be issued.

### **§ 13**

#### **Implementation and Transitional Provisions**

- (1) These regulations shall come into effect on the day following their publication in FU-Mitteilungen (the official register of Freie Universität Berlin).
- (2) Simultaneously, the Study and Examination Regulations for the Master's degree program published on 5th February 2014 (FU-Mitteilungen no. 9/2014, p. 58) will cease to be in effect.
- (3) These regulations apply to students are enrolled in the Master's degree program at Freie Universität Berlin. Students who were enrolled for the Master's degree program at Freie Universität Berlin prior to these regulations coming into effect shall study and complete their tasks on the basis of the Study and Examination Regulations in accordance with par. 2, unless they apply to the Examining Board for continuation of their studies in accordance with these regulations. In the latter case, on the occasion of alteration resulting from said application, the Examining Board shall make a decision regarding the scope of modules begun or completed when the application was made or regarding crediting of these performance items within the framework of these regulations, whereby the principles of legitimate expectation and equal opportunity will be respected. The decision regarding the transfer application will become effective at the beginning of the lecture period of the relevant semester. The alteration cannot be revised.
- (4) The possibility of completing the Master's degree program on the basis of the Study and Examination Regulations according to par. 2 (i.e. the Study and Examination Regulations of 2014) is guaranteed until the end of the summer semester 2017.

Appendix 1: Module Descriptions

[please see [German version](#) for detailed module descriptions]

**Appendix 2: Illustrative Degree Program Table**

<b>Subject-specific Semester</b>	<b>Selected Specialization Discipline</b>	<b>Second Selected Discipline</b>	<b>Interdisciplinary Studies</b>
<b>1st subject-specific semester</b> 30 credit points	Module A (10 credit points)	Module A (10 credit points)	Module 1 (10 credit points)
<b>2nd subject-specific semester</b> 30 credit points	Module B (10 credit points)	Module B (10 credit points)	Module 2 (10 credit points)
<b>3rd subject-specific semester</b> 30 credit points	Module C (10 credit points)	Module C (10 credit points)	Module 3 (5 credit points)
	North American Studies Colloquium (5 credit points)		
<b>4th subject-specific semester</b> 30 credit points	Master's Thesis 30 credit points		

\* The modules do not necessarily have to be assigned in the order A, B, C or 1, 2, 3.

### **Appendix 3: Report Card (sample)**

[please see [German version](#) for detailed module descriptions]

#### **Appendix 4: Certificate (sample)**

[please see [German version](#) for detailed module descriptions]